

Washing One Another's Feet
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John 13:1-17
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 13. We want to look again this morning at the spectacle that stunned the disciples on the night before Jesus' crucifixion, the spectacle which anticipated the even greater amazing spectacle of the cross. In John 13:1-17, we have Jesus washing His disciples' feet. We began to look at this two weeks ago, and we saw that this was a stunning and shocking event. It was even scandalous, we've said. For a teacher, a leader to wash His disciples' feet was something. They would not have washed each other's feet. I think the disciples all would have been willing to wash Jesus' feet, but John wouldn't have wanted to wash Matthew's, and Matthew wouldn't have wanted to wash Peter's. That would have been scandalous to them. It would have been like, "Jesus, did you hear that? John asked me to wash his feet. Rebuke him! Call down fire from Heaven." And yet Jesus does something that's completely outside the box to show them the nature of His atoning death, to teach them that if they are to be clean before God, that if they are to be made fit for the presence of a holy God, something utterly scandalous must happen. The Lord of life, the Prince of glory, must be nailed to a cross. The one who is the most blessed and the most holy must become sin. This picture would have been with them all night.

We saw first of all two weeks ago, it was to show them the nature of His atoning death. We talked about the purposes of this event, why Jesus did this, this acted out parable, and the first is to show them the nature of His atoning death. The second was to show them the depth of His love. As we read the passage again in a moment, you'll see that this was a way that Jesus demonstrated to the end His love, His love for them to the end, to the full extent. But the question I want us to consider this morning is precisely how do we obey Jesus' instruction to wash one another's feet? What exactly does that look like? Some have mistakenly applied this instruction, this graphic illustration followed by the instruction as Jesus says, "As I've done to you, so you do to one another. If I then the teacher and Lord washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet," and so they have institutionalized it into a religious rite or a sacrament of foot washing alongside baptism and the Lord's Supper, the sacrament of foot washing. Is that how we're to understand this? Or does it mean that we are called to humble service and love for one another? Is that specific enough? That's the question I want us to consider this morning.

When Jesus says, “Do you know what I have done to you?” and when He calls us to do, “As I have done to you, do to one another,” what does He mean? Let’s read John 13:1-17 together:

John 13:1-17

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. 2 During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, 4 *got up from supper, and *laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

5 Then He *poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 So He *came to Simon Peter. He *said to Him, “Lord, do You wash my feet?” 7 Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.” 8 Peter *said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” 9 Simon Peter *said to Him, “Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.” 10 Jesus *said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” 11 For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.”

12 So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 16 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. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Let’s pray together...

Our Father, we ask that Your Holy Spirit who inspired these words, breathed out every jot and tittle in the Scriptures, that He would now illuminate in our minds and our hearts Your word and make it living and active, that it would pierce to dividing joint and marrow, soul and spirit, to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart, and that You would use it to purify us. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Jesus said, "I did this as an example. I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." We talked about the word *example* is a word, a compound word, the preposition *under* joined to a word which means *to make a display*, and the idea is to make a display right under your eyes, to make it so evident and visible, such an impression that you will be able to follow this example. And the example is this act that Jesus does, this action through which He demonstrates His love, the washing of the feet. The question before us this morning is how are we or what are we called to do? Precisely, what are we called to do?

In fact, what we're going to do really is consider three questions. The title of the message is: *Washing One Another's Feet*. Two weeks ago, I think I titled the message: *Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet*. I'm really clever with my titles. Last time was *A Portrait of Love*, and then today is *Washing One Another's Feet*, continuing trying to mine out the glory of what Jesus has done in this amazing moment in His earthly ministry. And I want us to consider our thoughts today, washing one another's feet, around three questions. The first question is: What are we called to do? The second question is: Why are we called to do it? The third question is: How are we called to do it? So it's *What? Why? and How?*

1) What are we called to do?

What precisely does Jesus want us to do in response to this amazing spectacle? What is He telling us when He says, "As I have done to you, do to one another"? I mentioned earlier some have believed that it is to be sacramentalized, that there should be a regular part of the worship service where foot washing happens, and there are some well-meaning denominations who do that. I think they miss entirely the metaphorical nature of the action, though. Jesus wasn't doing this so that He could institute a sacrament. In fact, one of the reasons you know this beyond just the clear teaching of the text is that there's nowhere else in Scripture where that's really commended as a part of any kind of worship service. One place doesn't make something like that obvious. Baptism is all over the New Testament. The Lord's Supper is in a number of different places made clear in the New Testament, but foot washing is really only here, and so that's not the point.

In fact, Jesus makes clear as He explains what's happening, as the narrative unfolds, that what He's doing is a metaphorical statement. His act has a higher and spiritual significance, and that's the point. The point is what He's trying to tell us through the act, not the act itself. This becomes clear as we follow the narrative. When Peter makes his objection in Verse 8, and he says in such strong terms, "Never shall You wash my feet! Never!" I mean that's amazing, isn't it? He tells Jesus, "Never will You do what You think You want to do to me." How stupid. Peter could really be dumb, and that gives us hope, because if he could be accepted by God, then maybe you and I can. "Never will You wash my feet."

John 13:8 ~ ... Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

If it was just about the foot washing thing, would it be that big a deal? Clearly not. He's teaching something much more profound. "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me. You have no share in Me. You are not a partaker of all that I am doing if I do not wash you. If you want to have a part with Me, and if you want to have an inheritance with Me, if you want to be in Christ, you must allow Me to wash you." That's what He's saying, and it's not a literal act of foot washing that He's talking about. Foot washing was the means of teaching the bigger truth. What He's talking about is the washing of regeneration, that for you and me who were conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, for us to sit down at the table of God, for us to be brought into the presence of God, we must be cleansed. We are filthy and dirty.

So what the Old Testament anticipates in a number of places, but particularly Ezekiel 36:25 when it says, "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean," it goes on to say a few verses later, "I will remove your uncleanness. I will put my Spirit within you. I will give you a new heart. I'll take out your heart of stone and put in a heart of flesh." But this new heart that's being given, this supernatural work of God in which I would change fundamentally your nature is also a washing. It's a cleansing. That's what Ezekiel saw looking ahead to Christ six centuries before the birth of Jesus.

In Titus 3:4-6, I alluded to this, but turn with me over to Titus 3 for a moment and see this. When we see these images correctly, we see that salvation is not a small thing. It's not a light thing. It's not a small step to become a Christian. It's nothing less than a supernatural, infinite work of God. It is a supernatural, infinite work of God for a person who's been raised in the church. You were born to Christian parents. Some of you had that blessing. You were taught the Scriptures at home,

brought under the preaching of the word throughout your life, yet at the moment when the Gospel became real to you and you internalized what had been in your mind, and God made that impression from your mind to your heart and gave you a new heart, that was nothing less than a supernatural work of an omnipotent God. It was something that was so incredible that Paul says it's like you had darkness in your soul, and like the darkness of the pre-created malaise before the world was, when God said, "Let there be light," think about how dark it was. You've been in dark places when the power goes out and there's no light. Even the light from the alarm clock is gone. Go with me. You don't have your cell phone charged either, and it's a night where it's cloudy outside so the moon is covered up. It's amazing how dark it can be. But imagine before there was any light what the darkness must have been. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light suddenly. Think about the distance between that darkness, that primordial darkness, to "Let there be light."

He said that's what happens when someone even brought up in the church, taught the Bible throughout their life, at the moment they're saved, that's what happened. A miracle of creation, re-creation, new creation, is not a small thing, not something you just convince somebody to do. Yes, you're supposed to try to convince people to believe. The Bible says that. Knowing the fear of God, we persuade men. But when it happens, when they really believe, Paul goes on in that same chapter to say they become a new creation. Old things are passed away. All things become new. And we see this in this picture the Bible gives again and again of regeneration. Paul writing to Titus in Titus 3 uses this same powerful image of washing. He says in Verse 4:

Titus 3:4-6 ~ But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,...

The work of Jesus Christ our Savior resulted in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the pouring out of the Spirit brought about a fundamental washing. When somebody gets saved, what's happened is the Spirit has been poured out again in them and they've been washed, the washing of regeneration, completely renewed by the Holy Spirit. In fact, Titus 2:14 may be on the same page in your Bible. Look back to Titus 2:14. Well, actually in Verse 11, he says:

Titus 2:11 ~ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession,...

Purify means cleanse. That's the same Greek word that you have three times in John 13. Remember when Jesus says, "You're clean, but not all of you are clean, for He knew the one who was not clean." He uses the word καθαρός (katharos), and here it is again in Titus 2:14, ***...to purify for Himself...*** that is, it's the verb form καθαρίζω (katharizō). It means to cleanse, so that to be saved, you have to be cleansed, and that's what Jesus is teaching in the foot washing. And when Peter objects, He's saying, "Listen, if you want to have a part with Me, you must be cleansed with the cleansing that I'm about to effect through My death on the cross. There is no other way to be saved."

Now, we're still asking the question, though, "How can we wash one another's feet?" because that's what we're told to do later on as the narrative continues to unfold. How are we to wash one another's feet? One of the things we have to understand is that there is a distinction between the act of salvation, justification, and then the ongoing process of sanctification, that is, progressive growth in holiness, our salvation being worked out. A person is saved at a moment in time. There's a moment in time when someone is saved. Now, you may not be able to remember it. You may not know it. You may realize, and many Christians have this testimony, "You know, I'm not sure when I was saved. I know that at this season in my life, I was lost. I was in the dark. And then I can say that sometime later, I'm in the light. I was blind but now I see. I don't know exactly when it happened. I can't tell you the day or the hour, but I know I was blind and I know now I see."

So don't be alarmed that you can't remember the day or the hour. That's kind of a recent thing. There's nothing wrong with knowing. It's great if you know it, but there's nothing normative about it. There's nothing abnormal if you don't know the day or the hour. The issue is: Were you lost and now you know that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God? Your heart has been changed, and you want to live for His glory. Yeah, you still battle with sin, but you want to follow Christ. If that's happened, you've gone from darkness to light, and that had to happen. Even though you don't know the day or the hour, there had to be a moment where that happened.

There was a moment where God caused you to be born again, and that moment is a onetime event, and once you've truly been born again, you can never be lost. Once you've truly been born again, not truly made a decision for Christ or had a public, emotional experience. No, that's not what we're saying. Once you've truly been born of the Spirit, you cannot be lost. But though it's a onetime event to be saved, there's this sense in which our salvation has three tenses. As a Christian, you have the past tense, and that's when you got saved, when you were justified, when you finally believed and God opened your heart, and you truly believed on Christ. You truly repented and you looked to Jesus. At that moment, you were declared righteous forever. It was a point in time.

Then there's an ongoing sense of salvation. That's our sanctification. We grow in grace. It's an ongoing process. You were cleansed at a moment in time eternally, but you are being cleansed all the way until the final phase, the future. There's past, present, and future. You were saved, you are being saved, and you will be saved. When Jesus comes back or when we die, the moment that we breathe our last in this world, the Bible says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord—we put off our sin nature and we are holy forever in His sight. We're saved forever. But that's the future tense and the past tense. The present tense is what we're talking about now, how we wash one another's feet.

We have an ongoing need for cleansing. This is what comes out as Peter helps us so much by his over exuberance, by first of all saying, "Never will You wash my feet," and then Jesus clarifies in His answer, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with Me." This illustrates for us that this is more than just foot washing, right? Well, then Peter helps us again by overshooting. He's like a pendulum. He's often wrong but he's never in doubt. He just goes. "Well, Lord, if I have to be washed to have a part with You, not only my feet but my hands and my head. Give me a bath, Lord!" Jesus then teaches some more about what He's talking about and how we apply this. He's saying, "Wait a minute, Peter."

John 13: 10 ~ Jesus *said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

The point is He makes a distinction between the *bath*—that's a different Greek verb here, and thankfully translated *bathed* rather than *washed*. The word for *bath* is used. *Take a bath*. He's working from the natural to the spiritual. If you're going to someone's house, if you've been out working, it's for a banquet, you're going to someone's house for some special event and you've been out sweating all day, well, you go and you take a bath. And then when you walk the distance—back then

they had to walk everywhere they went—you walk on the dusty roads and you get there, and now all that's dirty really are your feet. To sit down and to have a good meal together, you need to wash your feet. It's customary to wash your feet, to get the grime off of your feet so that people don't have to smell them and look at them. It's hard for us to imagine that, but this is the reality of what it was like to live in the first century.

So they needed to have their feet cleansed, and the idea is He's saying, "Look, to come to God's banquet, you have to be bathed." That's regeneration. It's a onetime event, but just like you might go to one place and you wash your feet, and then you go somewhere else and you have to have your feet washed again, during that day you bathed in the morning, you go one place for lunch, you go one place for dinner, and you get your feet washed at both places. So the idea is that you have one bath, but you have many foot washings. So you have one spiritual bath, but many cleansings, many spiritual cleansings. And we can't bathe the other person, anybody. We can't do that spiritually. Only Jesus can, and we really can't even wash them, but we can have a part in it. We can have an assist in Jesus washing.

What are we called to do? What is He talking about? We're talking about progressive sanctification, how someone continues to grow in holiness, and what He's saying is this. If we're to wash one another's feet, we have a responsibility as Christians to work and labor for the sanctification of ourselves and those around us, and particularly, foot washing means if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you have a responsibility to labor for the purity and holiness of all your brothers and sisters. That's what He's saying.

We tend to think as Americans very individualistically, and there is a place in which you have to follow Christ as a person. It's not because of your family that you're saved. It's not because of your parents that you're saved. You must follow Jesus yourself. Yes, that's true, but in America we get that part right that you have to follow Christ yourself, but we don't understand how the Lord has a corporate body, and He thinks much more corporately than we do. Folks that come from Eastern cultures, they come at it the other way. They think more as groups, and secondarily as individuals. We think as individuals and then sometimes not even at all as groups, but secondarily as groups, and the Bible hits it in the middle. Basically you are one person before God, and yet you're also part of a body. But what He's saying here is we have a responsibility in the sanctification of every other Christian. Let me show you this.

Turn with me to Philippians 2. It's a very familiar passage. Look at Verse 12. Now, what I want you to realize is here in these verses, Verses 12 and 13, we run into the problem that we often encounter with the English translations of our Bibles, and that is that there is a plural *you* that is in the text, but it's not clear in English, because *you* in English other than Southern English where we fix this problem, *you* means *you* singular or it means *you* plural, right? You don't know. Context tells you. But here in the Greek, all of the *yous* are really *you* *alls*. He says in Verse 12:

Philippians 2:12 ~ So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed,...

When he says ...*you have always obeyed*,... it's *you* plural.

Philippians 2:12 ~ ...just as you (plural) have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your (plural) salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you (all), both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Even that command where we're supposed to work out our salvation, what God has done for us in that initial bathing, we're now supposed to work at being clean in the way that we live. "Every area, Lord, I want to bring under Your grace, and I want to be more like Jesus. I want to be cleaner. Help me to be more and more what You want me to be." He says that's not an individualistic pursuit. It's a corporate project. Work out your salvation. We see this idea that we have a responsibility to every other Christian a number of ways in the New Testament. One of the powerful ways that you can study it is to look at all the *one anothers*. If you search for *one another* in a Bible software package you'll find like 110 or so in the New Testament, but fifty-eight of them by my count are basically commands or instructions to do something for one another. Fifty-eight times we have this idea that you are to be about things for one another. Let me show you a few of them. Turn to Hebrews 10:23. We're going to see two *one anothers* here. Verse 23 says:

Hebrews 10:23 ~ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

What he's saying is listen. He's talking to people that are under tribulation, they're under persecution, and some are falling away, thus demonstrating their salvation is not really genuine, because true believers won't fall away. They'll persevere to the end. But nevertheless, the command is issued to all, "Persevere. Hold on." God tells them, "Hold fast your confession. Hold fast the confession that Jesus is the

Christ. Don't turn away from it because of persecution. Hold it fast without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 10:24 ~ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

Listen, in the midst of persecution, what do you need to do? You need to be thinking about how you can help your brothers and sisters to grow in love and righteous deeds, good deeds. He says:

Hebrews 10:25 ~ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:25 is often brought up as a call for church attendance, and it certainly is appropriate. A true believer should want to be with the body of Christ. It's assumed that that would be the case in the New Testament, that to become a follower of Jesus Christ, you're going to love His body. You're going to love your brothers and sisters. If you become a child of God, you're going to love your new family, and if you don't, you need to question whether or not you are truly a follower of Jesus Christ. But this verse, though it calls us to church attendance, it calls us to a different kind of church attendance. It's not just come to get what you can out of it. When you come, one of the reasons you should come to church on Sunday or Wednesday or whenever you can, one of the reasons you should come is because you're coming to stimulate your brothers and sisters to love and good works. I have a responsibility as I go into the building, as I'm walking up. What can I do today to bless the other Christians that are there, my brothers and sisters in Christ? How can I encourage them to love and good works? You do this to obey God. You and I are called to be interested in and personally involved in the sanctification of those around us.

Now, we looked earlier at Matthew 18:15. What are we called to do? Well, we're called to be interested in the sanctification of those around us, which means that we have to be willing to confront sin. When we see dirt on someone's feet, we're supposed to be willing to humbly wash it. And what does that look like? Well, Matthew 18:15 says:

Matthew 18:15 ~ "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private;

This is the way we live that out. Washing one another's feet is going to a brother or sister and saying, "I have a concern I want to talk to you about," and we work and labor lovingly, humbly at showing them their need, showing them the dirt so we can wash it away by the grace of God. We're committed to it. Verse 16:

Matthew 18:16 ~ But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;

The idea is be committed to washing his feet. This is hard for us to understand because we have to remember a person that's been born again used to be—and this is what every nonbeliever is—all about self. Every nonbeliever is all about themselves, and anything that looks different is just a veneer they put up to make it more effective to be all about self. It's kind of like you see that with a child. You know, the most selfish person in the world obviously is the infant. Now, he's not really the most selfish person in the world. He's the most obviously selfish person in the world, because he hasn't learned that to get what he wants, he needs to play the game. And at that point, you don't have to. You get what you want a lot of times without playing the game, right? But as you get older, you can't just cry every time, "Ahhh!!!" You have to learn how to play the game, and so unbelievers still are all about themselves, because we come into this world all about ourselves.

When someone is born again, what happens is the fundamental commitment to self is broken, they're transformed, and their fundamental commitment is to Christ. They still have selfishness in the old man, but there's a fundamental sea change, a shift of allegiance. When push comes to shove, the loyalty is to Christ. So now what happens, though, is we still have all that baggage. Depending on when you got saved and what your life was before Christ, you've got certain patterns of selfishness established. And then even as a believer, when you give in to sin, you're continuing to foster patterns of selfishness. So we're all about ourselves before we come to Christ, and we have these patterns of pride and these patterns of self-protection that we have learned to operate in. And then when you come to be a Christian, God has changed you at the center, but He says, "Work out your salvation. All of you, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Let it work itself out into every area of your life from the inside out." And it is such a challenge because we think, "Hey, I'm supposed to go talk to people about their sin," but we have the old baggage of I'm supposed to go the way I used to want to go, and say, "You are wrong."

For me, some of our sinful patterns, some of us are more naturally the fight or flight thing. Some of you are more naturally fighters, so when you learn how I'm supposed to deal with people's sin, you just are happy to do that, and, "I want to tell you, you think I've got problems. Look, I've seen your problems. Hey, my problems look really small." You know? And we go and just plow right through it. We bulldoze right through it. And others of us are more the flight. Let's avoid conflict. And this is really, I think, a perilous thing for folks in the south.

I mentioned earlier in the south we have it right, because we at least have *y'all* going for us, right? That's *you* (plural). But we have a lot of problems as any culture does. Sin is wrapped into all kinds of cultures, and in the south, one of the problems we have is being polite and nice. Being polite is a good thing in general, right? You don't just be rude to people. Of course not, but we can take being polite and nice to unhealthy extremes. To be polite means you don't confront issues. We don't speak directly. I remember a friend of mine in college, one of Patti's girlfriends, actually, who started dating a boy from New York. It was back in the 80's when we were in school, and so he's down here, and he's been down here just to come down and visit her. They met at some camp somewhere and he's come down to visit her. Not having been in the south much at all, he goes to her grandmother's house near Cartersville, Georgia, and they've stayed a couple hours, had a good visit, and they're getting up to leave, Lisa's mom, and Lisa, and her boyfriend, and the grandmother says, "Oh y'all don't leave now," as they're walking out, and he turns around and walks back and sits down. *Are you crazy? Don't you know the rule?* We say, "Don't leave now," but we don't mean, "Don't leave now." We mean, "Hey, I'm glad you came, but I'm glad you're leaving now. Maybe come back sometime soon." That's what we mean." Well, he didn't know that because we say what we don't mean, and that's not good, really.

I mean, not to get bent out of shape over little things like that, but when that affects our relationships and we don't want to talk to each other about real issues, that's a problem. It short circuits love, because the love we're called to exhibit is a love that the world cannot imagine. It's a love in which there is complete transparency, and at the same time, complete and total love. That's what we're called to. We are called to learn more and more about each other, to have more and more intimacy with each other. That way we know our hearts and we share, "I have this struggle, and I share it with you, and you understand that about me. And even though now you see more of the dirt, the grace of God in you overcomes the natural aversion to not want to be around that, and you wash my feet, and you humbly love me anyway."

So there's this transparency growing and this love growing where Christians are to be the one group in the whole world where there's real, genuine communication. We really can share our hearts. The lost world around us, they're all individual islands of selfishness. Like little ships passing in the night, there's no real connection, but the Christians are people who can really open up and share, and it takes the power of God and the grace of God on a daily basis to make that a reality. And that's what He's calling us to, and it means we have to confront sin. Galatians 6:1 says if any of you is caught in a transgression, those who are spiritual are to restore him in a spirit of gentleness. That is, when someone's caught in sin, when they're struggling, what are you supposed to do? You're supposed to go and to confront them. And right after that, he says:

Galatians 6:2 ~ Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.

What he's telling you in Galatians 6:2 when he says, "Bear one another's burdens," the real application of that is bear one another's sin. It's not just trying to help out when you're going through adversity. Yes, that's true too, but he's talking about bearing one another's burdens in the context of when someone's caught in a transgression. ***...and thus fulfill the law of Christ.*** Peter there is basically saying what John said in John 13. "The law of Christ is, I'm telling you, love one another as I've loved you, and that means love sinners when you see their sin, the way I've loved you."

We have commands over and over again, the *one anothers*. Build one another up. In Romans 15:14, Paul says, "I know that you have all wisdom, and you're filled with all goodness, and you're able also to admonish one another." Admonish (νουθετέω, noutheteō) comes from a compound word. νοῦς (nous) means the mind, and θετέω (theteō) comes from the word τίθημι (tithēmi), which means to place in the mind, but also to place the mind right. To admonish someone is to say, "Listen, you're not thinking correctly. Here's what you need to see." The same word is in Colossians 3:16 where it says:

Colossians 3:16 ~ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,...

There's another one of those: *dwell in y'all richly*. It's not just you putting the word in your own heart. I mean, it certainly means that, but that's not what the text explicitly says. It encompasses that. What it explicitly says is, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you." How does the word of Christ dwell in you? How do we obey that command? We obey that command by teaching and admonishing one another.

If you're not willing to teach one another, if you're not willing to admonish one another, then the word of Christ won't dwell in your richly. You see, we have a problem. We can't do it on our own. We need one another, which brings us to the second question. What are we called to do? We're called to be involved in the spiritual cleansing, the sanctification, of our brothers and sisters in Christ. That means we're willing to confront sin to wash our brothers' and sisters' feet. Secondly:

2) Why are we called to do it?

Clearly from the context of John 13, we're called to do it because we love them. I mean, Jesus washed their feet because He loved them to the end. He was demonstrating the full extent of His love. That's what it says in John 13:1. In fact, an interesting verse is Leviticus 19:18. Remember when Jesus was asked about the greatest Commandment? They were trying to trick Him because they were always trying to trick Him, and they always got completely just dazzled. What was the greatest Commandment? He reaches back not to the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. He goes back to Deuteronomy 6:5 and He says, "The greatest Commandment is that you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest Commandment." And then He says, "The second is likened to it," and again He doesn't reach to the Decalogue. He goes back to Leviticus 19:18, and He says, "The second is likened to love your neighbor as yourself. You're to love your neighbor. If you love God with all your heart and you love your neighbor as yourself, you fulfill the entire law and prophets." Everything God wants you to do is summed up in those two commands. Love God and love your neighbor. When you look at Leviticus 19:18, it's interesting the verse right before it, Verse 17, says this: "You shall not hate your brother. You must surely reprove him." Then there's another clause, and it says: **...love your neighbor as yourself;...** In the context of loving your neighbor as yourself, you must reprove your brother. The reason you confront a brother or a sister with sin is because you love them. I mean, just think about it. It's obvious this is the case. The Bible makes clear again and again that the way of sin is the way of misery. Proverbs 13:15 says the way of the transgressor is hard. I don't want you to continue on this path. You're just going to make your life so much harder. Psalm 32:10 says many are the sorrows of the wicked. Psalms 16:4 says the sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied, so that if you have idolatry in your life, what you're doing is you're multiplying your sorrow. And if I see your idol, I have an obligation to try to help you so that you won't multiply your sorrow. If I love you, won't I do that? If you love me, won't you do that to me? And beyond that, why are we called to do it?

We're called to do it because the true test and the true evidence of genuine saving faith is growth in holiness. Salvation happens at a moment in time and it cannot be undone. Genuine salvation can never be lost, but the Bible has a way of calling those of us who profess faith to not just rest on an experience. We're called to examine ourselves to see if we're in the household of faith, 2 Corinthians 13:5. Examine yourselves to see if you're in the household of faith. That is, you're to look at your life and see am I truly a believer? And how do you know? Well, you put things together. You look at Hebrews 12:14, which tells us to pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord. If you're growing in holiness, then you know that you're going to see the Lord.

Romans 8:12-14 is another verse that's often misinterpreted. That verse, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God, people say that this is the reason that I know what God said to me and I'm following what God said to me. He told me that I'm supposed to tell you this and I'm telling you what He said, and therefore I'm led by the Spirit of God. Have you ever heard that kind of thing? And they're so certain that their impression is from God that they say, "The Lord told me." Well, you should never say that about something other than what the Bible says. You can say, "I think that the Lord's impressed on me. I think. The only thing I know that God has said is this Book." Well, Romans 8:12-14, in Verse 14 he says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." Well, when you put it in context, he tells us in Romans 8:12:

Romans 8:12 ~ So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die;

He's saying if you profess to be a Christian, but your life is dominated by the flesh, you're going to die. You're going to go to hell because you're not really a believer. Christians struggle, yes they do, but he goes on to say:

Romans 8:14 ~ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

What he's saying is and in context clearly is that the evidence of being a true child of God is that the Spirit is leading you out of sin and into holiness. That's what it means. And that's how you know that you're truly born again. That's what you're looking for in your life. And the Christian life is like this. There are times when there are downs, and there can be real times of backsliding. Certainly there can, but the overall direction of the life, even though there might be like this, the overall

direction of the curve is like that. And listen, one of the reasons that so many Christians are struggling, and one of the reasons that you and I are struggling in areas we're struggling in is this: People aren't washing our feet. You're struggling in areas because other Christians haven't loved you enough to confront you. They haven't loved me enough to confront me, and because of that, my sanctification is stalled. And this is what Jesus says. "Listen, you've got to wash one another's feet. You have to love each other enough to confront one another." What could be more important than helping someone grow in their love for Christ and put off sin? God's just made it so that we need other people.

In fact, it's interesting, foot washing. I thought about this, and I don't want to draw too much out of this, but can't somebody else wash my feet better than I can? Amen. I mean, as you get older and you get less flexible, I know it changes, and as you get more in the midsection, it's harder to get down there too. But even if you're young and nimble, and you've got really good dexterity, you can get to your feet, but somebody else can do it for much longer without the strain that you have to go under. I mean for me, I need someone to help me with that, and that's just a little picture of the reality that for us to see our sin, we need someone else to look at us.

C. J. Mahaney used that illustration of the guy that's in the restaurant and he has cream cheese on his mustache, and of course he doesn't know it. He seems like he's about to go into an important meeting, and Mahaney realizes, "I've got to tell him. I'm going to have to say, 'Excuse me, sir, you've got cream cheese all over your mustache.'" I mean, how could he not tell him? The guy would walk into this meeting, saying, "I'm very glad to meet you. I'm going to sell you something." "No you're not. I'm not going buy anything from some guy looking like that." Well, we have cream cheese on our face. We have things we can't see, and we need someone to tell us. If someone loves us, they will tell us.

Now, why are we called to do it? It's because we love. We're called to be involved in the sanctification. What are we called to do? We're called to confront one another, to be involved in mutual sanctification, and also realizing, "I need to be confronted. More than anybody else, I need to have my feet washed." Why? Because we love them.

3) How are you to do it?

Back to John 13, how do you wash someone's feet? Jesus says in Verse 13:

John 13:13 ~ You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

The fact is Jesus washed their feet by laying down His role as Lord and Teacher, and He took upon Himself the form of a slave. And so how are we do it? We're to come in the same way, and I want to just say three things here in closing. There are three things that illustrate how we're supposed to go. How can we cultivate a community where transparency really is something we can live with, that we can learn to go to each other and have those hard conversations? And realize a lot of the time it doesn't get worked out the first time you talk to somebody, because we're not very good at this. We have to learn the skill of how to even do it, and we have to learn how to receive correction, and we have to learn to love correction. A wise man loves reproof, the Bible says. But we're not wise, are we? We have patterns of foolishness. But there are three things.

We need to go humbly, and this gets at what I was just saying about Jesus. He lays down His garments. He lays aside His garments and He takes up the mantle of the slave. We need to go humbly. When we go to someone that we have a concern about, when we see some area of their life we're concerned about, we need to go humbly. First of all, how do you go humbly? Well, you spend some time getting the log out of your own eye (Matthew 7:1-5). Remember that Jesus says, "You're a hypocrite when you have a log in your own eye and you try to go get a speck out of somebody else's eye." The word picture is humorous. I mean, how can somebody say, "Let me get this little speck out of your eye. Just trust me. I'm going to get this out of your eye." "You're going to reach in my eye? That's bad enough, but you have a board across your face. I don't think so." He says, "Get the log out of your own eye first." That is, we have to see what sin is in us.

A lot of times we're going into a place where we have conflict. Someone's hurt us. When we have to get the sin out, we have to see, "What did I do to contribute to this? Lord, what sin have You exposed in me? What are you doing in me?" We spend some time looking at our sin, and often times we think of our sins as relatively small, but God says, "If you're humbling yourself, you're going to see whatever part you have, even if it's only 10%, you're going to see that 10% as ugly and worthy of hell, and you're going to so hate that 10% that it seems like a log, so

that when you go, you realize, “I’m coming and I’m not even worthy to come and talk to you about even what may have been 90%, because I’m a sinner.” We go like this. We humble ourselves and we take upon the mindset of a slave. “Lord, I’m going and I know they may not understand, and I’m not sure I fully have—I know I don’t understand like You understand, but I know there’s a problem You want me to deal with, and so I go, but I know that I’m unworthy.” So you go humbly, getting the log out of your own eye.

One of the ways you can also go humbly is you don’t assume that you know what the problem is fully. I mean, that’s just really foolish of us to think we know the whole problem. We only have a limited glimpse of the situation. Now, we have enough of the glimpse of the situation to know there is a problem that we are supposed to go talk to them about and address, but don’t assume too much. Proverbs 18:13 says that he who speaks before he hears, it is foolishness to him, that if you speak and you just make a declaration of what the situation is, but you don’t even know, it’s foolishness. Get all the facts. And so I think one of the best things we can do when we go to someone humbly is ask questions. “Hey, I’d like to ask you a question. You know, this thing happened the other day, and I want to talk with you about that,” because a lot of times we misunderstood completely what happened. It wasn’t as bad as it seemed. It may still be a problem, but it wasn’t as bad as it seemed to us.

So you go humbly and you go gently. I mean, how did Jesus go? He was meek and lowly. Think about this. If when Jesus corrected people He went meek and lowly, how can I not do that? Who do I think I am? How could anybody, how could we ever in self-righteousness, and we do this, look down our noses at someone else’s sin? How ungodly that is, but it doesn’t mean we don’t go. We go humbly and gently.

I love the picture in Isaiah 42 of the servant of the Lord. When He comes, a bruised reed He will not break. A smoking flax He will not extinguish. So gentle is the Savior. “Lord, help me go in the gentleness and humility that You have exhibited to me.” And you see if you’ve looked at your log long enough, you had to receive that again, didn’t you? “Thank You for showing me. Thank You for using this circumstance to show me this sin. Thank You, Lord. Thank You for cleansing me. Thank You for loving me. Thank You for being gentle with me.”

You go lovingly. Sin is more dangerous than we realize. It’s much more deadly than we realize. The picture we looked at earlier, if your brother sins, Matthew 18:15, remember the context we read earlier in the service? If any man has a

hundred sheep and one strays, that's the reality that when someone's caught in sin, it's like a sheep being left alone. It's just a matter of time before they're totally destroyed. So we go lovingly. Hebrews 3:12-13 is one of those other *one another* passages where the author of Hebrews says, "As long as it is called today, while it is today, as long as it is called today, encourage one another lest you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." We're to encourage one another to turn from sin because we love each other.

The reality is one of the hardest things in the world is to go to a brother or sister and confront an issue, isn't it? Especially those of us who are prone to being the flight type, we just avoid the problem and it'll fix itself. That's been my philosophy. Whether it's a problem at home like something's broken. Well, maybe it'll fix itself. It does happen occasionally. That could happen with the ice maker. Anyway, but relationships don't work that way. You don't just leave it alone and it fixes itself. Now, there are times where God wants us to overlook an offense. Yes, it's the glory of man to overlook an offense. But where there's a real problem and you see it, and God's allowed you to see it, you need to go humbly, and gently, and ask questions, and see, "What's going on here? Can I talk with you about something?" We need to learn just to trust each other.

Now, we know that we're all weak, but we should trust the Savior and the Spirit who's in my brother or sister. I know they've got problems. When Satan's lying to us, our flesh says, "Who are they to be talking to me about my problem?" Wait a minute, we both just need to lay aside our garments of honor and our reputation, take up the mantle of a slave, and say, "Let's talk. Tell me what you're seeing. Let's serve one another in love. Let's spur one another on to love and good works." If we learn to do that, that's the kind of love that He talks about later in the chapter, where He says, "By this all men will know you're My disciples, by your love for one another." May God help us to see that.

Let's pray...

Father, we thank You for Your faithfulness. We thank You for the glory of Your salvation that You have made known to us through Jesus Christ, that sending Your Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, He lived a holy and perfect life, and then He offered Himself as a sacrifice. He became sin on the cross, bearing the sins of everyone who would ever believe. You poured out Your holy wrath upon Him so that there remains no more wrath for sin for those who believe. You raised Him from the dead to declare the victory, to announce our justification.

And Father, not only that. You have saved us and cleansed us in such a glorious way, but You continue to go on cleansing us. Help us, Lord, to long for holiness more and more, and to so long for it that we're willing to humble ourselves before each other. We pray for those that are here today who have not believed in Jesus Christ, not really placed their faith in You, that today You would open their eyes to see that I want to follow a God who is that loving and gentle and kind, and is that wise and committed to my holiness that He would have done such an amazing thing through Christ and invite me into a community of faith where I can have real relationships with other people in honesty and integrity, humility and love. Lord, You are so good, and we praise You in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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