

91. Humility personified

August 27, 2017

There are 89 chapters in all four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. 85 of 89 chapters focus on the last three and a half years of Jesus' life on earth. Then, 29 out of those 85 chapters focus on the final week of Jesus on earth. Finally, 13 out of 29 deal with the last 24 hours of His life.

From chapter 13 to 17 in the Book of John, the apostle John covers the Last Supper, a.k.a., the "Upper Room Discourse." At this point, Jesus had less than 18 hours before His crucifixion and less than 24 hours before His death.

This was a very, very intimate setting, no public was allowed. Jesus chose this place for this moment, so that He could instruct and prepare His disciples for the upcoming traumatic situation – His own crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

Though Jesus was sitting at the head of the table which was the place of honor, but He took the lowest position of a slave by exemplifying servanthood to the disciples – washing their feet. Jesus, divine humility personified, gave them an unforgettable lesson in humility, and with His actions, He rebuked their selfishness and pride, as well as ours.

A. SUBMISSION vs. SELFISHNESS

John 13:1-2 Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. 2 And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,

I am sure that you all have noticed by now the apostle John emphasizes the fact that Jesus lived on the "Heavenly itinerary" precisely as He was doing the Father's will.

What was this divinely appointed "hour"? It was the time when He would be glorified through His death, resurrection, and ascension. From the human point of view, it meant suffering, death, and defeat; but from the divine point of view, it meant glory.

When the servant of God is in the will of God, he is immortal physically and invincible spiritually until his work is done. The Jewish religious rulers could not even arrest Jesus, let alone kill Him, until the right hour appointed by God the Father had arrived.

While Jesus was in complete submission to the Father's will, Judas' mind was heading to the path of ultimate selfishness and self-destruction at full speed.

B. THE KING WHO WASHED THE FEET OF HIS SLAVES

John 13:3-5 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, 4 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. 5 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

Two things we should keep in mind:

1) The roads were dusty.

With the exception of the highways and the main streets in Jerusalem, the majority of the streets in Israel were very dusty and muddy after rain.

2) They didn't wear shoes, rather open toe sandals, crude version of Birkenstock, if you will.

Because of these two reasons, the Israelites' feet were dirty whenever they went outside of their homes.

When Jesus saw a roomful of pride and dirty feet, it was the perfect time for a divine display of humility that His disciples would remember forever. Can you imagine the scene in the room? The argument was subsiding as the Lord Jesus started to take off His outer garment and girded a towel and started to wash the first disciple's feet. I am sure that no one was talking by now. The only sound there was the water splashing around the dirty feet in a basin. The faces of the disciples were distorted with shock and embarrassment.

From v4 to v12, I find four very important principles we must learn and practice humility. Please pay attention:

1) Humility is unannounced

John 13:4 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.

The original Greek word for "humility" means, "having a humble opinion of one's self; a deep sense of one's littleness." It also carried the idea of serving another person without any recognition in mind.

Did you notice that Jesus didn't whistle to get everyone's attention before He started to wash their feet? He, rather, rose quietly and laid aside His garments and started to wash them. Some of you can whistle, I mean 'WHISTLE'. Their whistles are so loud that it would wake up George Washington from his grave. When I try to whistle, it sounds like a deflated balloon spitting out the last portion of air.

Humility is the most beautiful and delicate flower in Christianity. Because as soon as it shows its exquisite beauty to others, it disappears immediately. The true humble man of God never says that he is humble, or never looks down on others over his nose because they are not spiritual like him.

2) Humility is willing to receive – without embarrassment

John 13:6-8 Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." 8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

Tucking his feet under himself far away from Jesus, Peter resisted the Lord. But his resistance only led to rebuke.

The false humility that takes the lowest place is just as hateful to God as the pride that takes the highest place. God is not impressed by our status in society or in the church. He is not a Respector of person's intelligence, achievement, position, status, or wealth. He is not influenced by what people say or think about us, because He sees the thoughts and motives of the heart of every one of us.

After you do a good job for the Lord, when other brothers and sisters in Christ compliment you, don't say, "Shucks, it wasn't me; it was the Lord." We already know that. Just say, "Thank you. Praise the Lord." False humility secretly wants more praises from people for self-glorification, not for the Lord.

3) Humility is not a sign of weakness.

John 13:9-11 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." 11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

In response to Jesus, Peter swung to the other side of the pendulum. Don't laugh at Peter, because we often are very much like him.

When the sinner trusts the Savior, he is "bathed all over" and his sins are washed away and forgiven.

Hebrews 10:17-18 then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." 18 Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

However, as the believer walks in this world, it is easy to become defiled. He does not need to be bathed (saved) all over again; he simply needs to have that defilement cleansed away. God promises to cleanse us when we confess our sins to Him.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

4) Humility does not play favorites.

John 13:11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

I wouldn't be one bit surprised if Jesus was praying for each of the disciples as He washed their feet. But what about Judas' feet? Yes, I believe that He prayed for Judas as well, even though He knew that he would commit history's worst act of treachery in a few short hours.

Don't you ever wonder why Jesus was washing the feet of Judas? The Lord knew that He was stooping down to serve the one who would soon stoop to perform the history's lowest act of treachery for the lousy 30 pieces of silver.

Doesn't Jesus' example tell us something special about humility? Doesn't it remind us that we are not only called to serve those who actually like us, but also someone who is not so loveable? We are called to serve all people – the lovely and the unlovely, the friendly and the not-so-friendly. When was the last time you "washed the feet" of someone like Judas in your workplace or in your home? Ouch, eh?

C. HUMILITY TO PRACTICE, NOT JUST TO KNOW

John 13:12-17 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Our Lord Jesus is the BEST teacher in the universe. He, who graciously has done the lowest servant's work – washing the dirty feet of His prideful disciples who would never, ever forget that true servanthood object lesson, is telling them to do as He did.

This very important biblical principle applies to every single born-again Christian around the world. Learning our Lord Jesus' instructions doesn't stop at reading,

acknowledging, even memorizing, but He puts the tremendous emphasis on obedience. With that being said, I see 3 important points I must bring to your attention:

1) Obedience means personal involvement

John 13:14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

We cannot serve one another at arm's length or in absence. Willingness must precede involvement.

If you know that there is someone who needs your help and you have the means or capabilities and time to help, but if you choose to not help because of your selfishness, I need to point out two things to you: First, you are directly disobedient to the Lord; second, you are helping satan by not being obedient to the Lord.

2) Obedience requires Christlike unselfishness.

John 13:15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

Being obedient to Him sometimes requires something that we don't want to do, don't care to do, even hate to do. To do this, we need to see others as Christ sees them. We will need to risk reaching out, giving up the luxury of staying in our comfort zone, giving up our preference for what our Lord wants. Unselfishness never comes easy.

3) Obedience results in ultimate blessings from the Lord.

John 13:17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

God's blessings come when we obey His commands. But there is a sequence: we have to be obedient to Him first, then, we will receive His blessings.

In these 6 verses, from v12 to v17, the Lord Jesus emphasized our obedience to Him 3 times, do you think that it is kinda important?

Some of you might be thinking right now, "Preacher, you started to teach about humility, but you are finishing with obedience. How do you connect those two?" For that question, I am going to ask you this, "Can you show me one Christian who is arrogant, but being obedient to God's Word, or can you show me one Christian who is humble, yet being disobedient to what the Bible teaches?" You cannot. When you are genuinely humble in the sight of God, you are doing everything you can to be obedient to God's commands.

Does it mean any Christian who is humble and obedient will not get ripped off or hurt in the process? Does it mean those who receive God's blessings for their humble obedience will never go through suffering or death? No, a thousand times no!!! May I remind you of the perfect Model of humble obedience who finished His earthly ministry as a corpse on a cross? But Jesus pleased the Father in heaven, so will we if we are humble and obedient to Him who is in heaven.

I like what the late 18th century missionary Andrew Murray said in his book "Humility", "Pride needs to die in us for anything of heaven to live in us." How true!

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Humility must not be done in a selective or exclusive manner, serving one another, not just the Lord.

2) God's blessings results from demonstrating humility and obedience, not just learning about it.

3) "It's difficult to stand on a pedestal and wash the feet of those below."
Chuck Colson