

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Loving To The Limit
John 13:6-11
Part Two

I am sure that you are all aware, as we enter our fourth year of war in Iraq, that there is a growing debate about what our next step should be.

There are those who are advocating that we increase our troop strength in Iraq in order to put down the insurgency through force of arms. Senator John McCain is one of those individuals who is advocating such an action.

There are others who believe that our current troop level is sufficient and that in time we will be successful. This is what our President believes.

And then there are those who believe we should immediately withdraw all our troops from Iraq. Congressional Representative John Murtha is a leading spokesman for this position.

So, now let me ask you a question. Who is right? Is it John McCain? Is it John Murtha? Or is it the president? I can give you a very definitive answer to this question. We don't know! In fact, we don't know if any of them are right. Why? They are finite and limited both in their knowledge and understanding. At best they are only making educated guesses as to what our best option might be. This thought should not be surprising to us. What should be surprising to us is how dogmatic people can be in light of their human limitations. And this is especially true when someone will state their opinion so dogmatically while resisting Christ's effort to serve them.

This thought brings us back to John's account of the foot washing in **John 13:1-17**. We are presently breaking this passage into three different parts. The first part that we considered last week was the love of Christ exemplified (John 13:1-6).

And how was Christ's love exemplified? Christ's love was exemplified by the fact that even though it was only a matter of hours before He would be betrayed and crucified, Christ, in this act of foot washing, not only demonstrated but also illustrated that He loved His disciples and that He loved them to the end. This is what we considered last week.

Hopefully this thought continues to encourage us. It is a wonderful thing to know that the God of this universe loves us and will continue to love us in any and every circumstance to the very end.

This weekend we will continue our examination of John's account of the foot washing. We will not look at the love of Christ exemplified, but this time we will look at the love of Christ explained (John 13:6-11). This particular part of our passage will go from **verse 6** to **verse 11**.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

My hope, as we consider “the love of Christ explained,” is that we, in the midst of whatever circumstances we might be facing, be reminded that Christ not only loves us to the end, but that He will love us perfectly to the end even though we might, at any given point in time, be tempted to think strongly otherwise.

So, let us now begin to look at Christ’s love explained in **John 3:6-11**. Jesus already had risen from the supper table and had begun to wash the disciples feet. We have already seen this in **John 13:5**. How many disciples’ feet had Jesus already washed before coming to Peter? We do not know. And how had each of these disciples responded as Jesus washed their feet? We do not know.

But we do know how Peter responded when Christ approached him. Let me read for you **John 13:6**. **“And so He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, ‘Lord do you wash my feet?’”**

So, how did Peter respond to Christ’s attempt to wash his feet? Peter resisted. Why would he have done this? Peter resisted Christ’s attempt to wash his feet because he believed that such a task was beneath Christ. Peter believed that such a task was more fitting for a slave than for the Messiah. This is why Peter resisted.

You might think to yourself, “What a presumptuous thing for him to do in light of who he was and who Christ was,” but what he was doing really may not be a whole lot different than what we ourselves might do at times. What do I mean?

Jesus is committed to loving us, and in His unwavering love for us, He will allow certain things to come into our lives that might be very difficult for us to understand or appreciate similar to this foot washing; but this does not mean that just because we might not understand or appreciate what Christ is doing, that we should feel the freedom to protest His various expressions of love toward us as if we know better than Him or how He should love us.

Several years ago I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Was the cancer I was diagnosed with a good thing? No, it was not a good thing! Cancer, as well as every other disease, is the result of the fall of man and is a part of the curse. But even though cancer in and of itself is not a good thing God permitted that cancer to enter my life as an expression of His love in order to accomplish some good thing in me and/or through me.

What does **Romans 8:28** tell us? **“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”**

Do I understand the good that God has accomplished and will accomplish through the cancer that He, as an expression of His love, permitted to enter my life? I am not sure that as of yet I do! But I do understand that what has happened to me was an expression of God’s love toward me, and I certainly hope that by God’s grace I will not protest this expression of love as Peter protested Christ’s expression of love here in **John 13:6**.

So, how did Christ respond to Peter’s protest? Let us now read **John 13:7**. **“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter.’”** What did Jesus mean by this statement?

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Jesus, in John 13:7, makes it clear to Peter that though He did not expect him to presently understand the significance of this foot washing, He did expect him to understand it in the future.

How did Peter respond to Christ's statement? Peter brushed Jesus' statement aside and continued his protest, but this time his protest became far more forceful. Let me read for you the first part of **John 13:8. "Peter said to Him, 'Never shall You wash my feet!'"**

Jesus had drawn a contrast between "now" and "hereafter" in **John 13:7**. He had told Peter that he did not understand "now" the significance of what He was doing in respect to the foot washing but that he (Peter) would understand the significance "hereafter" inferring that at some point in time, yet in the future, Peter would not only accept what He was presently doing, but that he would even appreciate it. This is the thought that Peter is reacting to in **John 13:8** when he says, "**Never shall You wash my feet!**"

Peter, in the first part John 13:8, was, in effect, telling Christ that no matter how much time elapsed, he would never ever allow Christ to humiliate Himself by washing his feet.

So, what was Peter's problem? Peter understandably was only looking at the foot washing as a foot washing and not as a picture provided by Christ to help him and the other disciples to see a very important spiritual truth. So, what was this very important spiritual truth?

Let us continue to read **John 13:8. "Peter said to Him, 'Never shall You wash my feet!'"** And now let us look at Christ's response. "**Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.'**"

Christ's response to Peter's strong objection raises a couple of different questions. First of all, what kind of washing was Christ talking about when He said, "**If I do not wash you?**"

Christ, in John 13:8, was not talking about washing Peter's feet with water, but rather He was talking about washing away Peter's sin with the blood of the cross as God's Passover Lamb. This is what He was talking about. Peter was objecting to the humiliation of the foot washing, but Jesus, using the foot washing, wanted to talk about a much greater humiliation. He wanted to talk about a much greater humiliation that He was about to suffer on their behalf.

Jesus, using the humiliation of the foot washing as a talking point, wanted Peter to understand that unless He as God's Passover Lamb humbled Himself on the cross, Peter would have no part with Him.

This brings us to a second question raised by Christ's response to Peter's strong objection. What did Jesus mean when He told Peter he would have no part with Him if He (the Lord Jesus) did not wash him (Peter) in the way that we have just explained?

The word "part" (MEROS) was regularly used to speak of an inheritance (Luke 15:12) and can be used to speak of eschatological blessings (Revelation 20:6).

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

This is how I believe that Christ used it here. Christ was, in essence, telling Peter that the future blessing of the kingdom was dependent upon His humiliation on the cross of Calvary.

So, did Peter have any clue what Christ was saying? No, not really. He thought Jesus was still talking about foot washing.

Knowing this helps us to understand the response of Peter in **John 13:9**. Let me now read this verse for you. **“Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.’”**

My, how quickly things change! Why had Peter’s attitude changed so dramatically in respect to the foot washing? It was because he thought that Jesus had told him that if he did not allow Christ to do this, if he did not allow Christ to wash his feet, he could kiss any hope of entering Christ’s kingdom and enjoying the blessings of that kingdom good-bye. And this thought obviously had shaken Peter up.

Peter, accepting though not fully understanding what Christ had said about the necessity of him being washed, dramatically changed his attitude about the foot washing in John 13:9.

So, Peter goes from one extreme to another. It is almost as if Peter is thinking that if allowing Christ to wash his feet will bring about such a good result, in terms of Christ’s future kingdom, then perhaps if Jesus should also wash his hands and his head, and do an even more extensive cleansing, that it might produce an even better result. Isn’t this so typical of Peter. He has gone from one extreme to another.

In the Gospels he is pictured as a man who again and again loses his balance. You see him walking courageously on the waters in **Matthew 14:28** and then a little later you hear him utter the cry, “Lord, save me” in **Matthew 14:30**. At one moment he makes a glorious confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” in **Matthew 16:16**; and hardly have the echoes of this wonderful declaration faded, when he begins to rebuke the very Christ whom he has just confessed in **Matthew 16:22**. Just a little while after the foot washing-hence, during this same night, Simon will promise to lay down his life for Jesus. We will see this in **John 13:37** and then just a few hours after this he will be saying in **John 18:17**, **“I am not His disciple.”**

Was Peter a man who could easily go from one extreme to another? And the answer would have to be yes. And we certainly see this here in **John 13**. One moment he is saying to Jesus, **“Never shall you wash my feet!”** and the next moment he is saying, **“Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”** Peter’s attitude was so dramatically changed about the foot washing that he was inviting a further work of cleansing. So, how will Jesus respond to this exuberance?

Let us now read **John 3:10**. **“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.’”**

Now pay close attention to what I am about to say. I do not believe that this is the best translation of the Greek text. Before we can understand how Christ responded, I believe that we, first of all, have to understand His exact words.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

A better translation of John 13:10, I believe, would be “He who had a bath (LOUO) does not need to wash (NIPTO).”

I know that that the phrase referring to the washing of the feet in **verse 10** is included in a wide range of Greek manuscripts and so is found in most translations such as the NAS and the NIV. But it is missing in a number of other Greek manuscripts, most notably the Codex Sinaiticus.

I also know that the Greek word for “bath” (LOUO) generally refers to complete bathing and the second (NIPTO) to a partial washing. But John often uses pairs of verbs as if they were synonyms (to know, to send, to love, etc.) and the same is likely here.

Therefore, in the midst of textual controversy about the correct reading of **John 13:10**, I have to favor the translation that best fits the flow of the passage, which I believe is **“He who had a bath does not need to wash.”**

This reading makes better sense to me. Peter, in his misguided exuberance in **John 13:9**, had corrupted the very point that Christ was making by His foot washing. And what was that?

Christ wanted to make sure that Peter knew that once a person had been washed in the blood of His cross, they would not need to be washed again as Peter had suggested in order to be a part with Him.

Have you in your desire to be set free from the filth of your sin come to Christ by faith in order to be washed in the blood of the lamb? Or in other words, have you, desiring to be set free from the filth of your sin, by faith, gone through the door that Christ through His death, burial and resurrection opened to heaven? If you have, then you have had a bath. And you certainly do not ever need to wash again. Or in other words, you do not have to be saved all over again. Christ’s work on your behalf in washing you is once for all and does not need to be repeated.

Does this mean that we will not sin again? No! Of course we will sin again, and if we do sin, certainly we will need to confess that sin just as **1 John 1:9** tells us to do. But we will never again have to wash. Why? Because once we wash in the blood of the Lamb, we will be clean. Or in other words, “Once saved always saved!”

So, how did Christ view Peter? Christ viewed Peter as already clean. He viewed Peter as already having been washed. Isn’t this what Jesus said? **“And you are clean.”**

But they were not all clean because the verse goes on to say in **verse 10**, **“But not all of you.”** Why did Jesus say this to Peter? John explains this to us in **John 13:11**. **“For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’”**

John included this thought in this verse to make sure that everyone would know that the betrayal by Judas was not a surprise to Jesus. He knew that this was going to happen. This is why Jesus is able to love us perfectly. He is not limited as we are in either His knowledge or discernment.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

So let me ask you, what do you think happened after this? Do you believe that Peter submitted to the foot washing? Absolutely! Did he understand it? No! Jesus had already made it clear that he and the other disciples would not understand it. He had said, **“What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter.”**

But even though he still did not understand why Christ was doing what He was doing, he did choose to trust Christ and to obey Christ.

And this is also our challenge today. When Christ in His love permits a difficult situation to come into our lives, we need to be careful that we do not have a knee jerk response to the circumstance and assume or even perhaps dogmatically presume that we know best what should be done. Rather we need to humble ourselves, turn to Christ and His word, and seek to obey just as Peter did in this text, even when we do not understand what Christ is seeking to accomplish through the circumstance that He has permitted to come into our lives.

May God grant us the grace, when He lovingly permits difficult things to come into our lives, to trust Him knowing that though we may not know what is best for us, He does.