

THE AWESOME GLORY OF CHRIST
(In His Love for His Disciples, #1)
John 13:1-17

We live in a world that eagerly and lavishly pours out glory upon those we esteem to be worthy. Witness the ticker tape parades of World Series and Super Bowl winners. Witness the Academy Awards just last week. Witness the school beauty pageants that are so popular. Witness any area of human endeavor. But all of this glory rolled into one big package is but a pin light to the sun when compared to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The glory of Jesus Christ was manifested from the night of His birth, when the Judean sky was lit up like noonday and the angels broke forth with shouts of, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men". It was revealed once more at His baptism when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove and the Father cried out from Heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). It was revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration, when His countenance shown like the sun before Peter, James, John, and Andrew. But there was not a day of Jesus' ministry that He did not in some way display His magnificent glory to the sons of men.

But today we are going begin looking at the awesome glory of Christ as revealed in the last night and day of His life. And for the next five weeks we are going to camp out in that glory. We are going to see Jesus' glory with respect to His disciples, and to the devil, and to death. And I'm praying for two results as we behold His glory in these things. First of all, I pray that every one of us will elevate Jesus to the place of undisputed preeminence in our lives, that we give Him His rightful place as Lord of our lives and will glorify Him and Him alone. And secondly, as the apostle Paul says, that as we behold His glory, we will be changed into His image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

Turn in your Bibles, please, to John 13 : 1-17. The setting of John 13 is the annual Passover Feast, which was in memory of God's deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. It began with a supper on the evening of the 14th day of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish year. And the sacrifices of the feast reminded God's people of the blood that was shed and put on the door posts of their homes that caused the death angel to pass over them and spare all of their firstborn sons. But this year the Passover Supper was unique, for it was the last time it would ever be observed. From that night forward it would no longer be the Passover Supper, but the Lord's Supper. For the fruit of the vine would not be a memorial of the lamb's blood that was shed at the Exodus, but would be in memory of the blood of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed on Calvary's cross for the sins of the world.

Now, this last Passover Supper took place on Thursday evening, the night before Jesus was crucified. And at this supper we see the glory of Jesus in full display **through His marvelous love for His disciples**. Look at vs. 1. John writes that Jesus loved His disciples to the end. The Greek word for “to the end” means to the “utmost”, or to “completeness”. It can also mean to “perfection”. James uses it twice in James ch. 1, when he speaks of patience having her “perfect work”, and also about looking into the “perfect law of liberty”. Paul uses the word when he says in Romans 12:2 that the will of God is “perfect”. So this is the idea behind the words “to the end”. Jesus loved His disciples perfectly, with perfect kindness and perfect patience and perfect forgiveness. But the words can carry another meaning. It can also mean, “To the finish line”. One writer’s translation was that Jesus’ love “saw it through”. His love for His disciples didn’t quit until He drew His last breath.

You know, many people can show love to others when their own circumstances are good. But when their circumstances change they immediately assume an inward focus, and from that point on “It’s all about me”. Now, certainly we cannot fault ourselves or others for being concerned in the difficult situations of life, whether it is a health issue, or whether we just can’t pay the bills, or whether we have an unloving spouse or wayward child, or if you are a young person whether your parents don’t really care, or if your best friend stabs you in the back, or if you don’t have any real friends at all. But Jesus’ whole world was absolutely caving in on Him. He knew that He was about to be arrested, tried, and then crucified, which was most horrible form of death known to man. And He knew that His best friends, the ones He had poured His life into for 3½ years, were all about to cut and run. A couple of them would return at one of His trials, but He would hang on a cross and die almost all alone. But to the very end, Jesus’ focus was not on Himself, but on His disciples. In His great prayer in Jn. 17, only hours before He died, the vast majority of His prayer was not for Himself, but His disciples. He asked the Roman soldiers who arrested Him to let His disciples go free.

Beloved, if you are God’s child, Jesus’ love for you today is the very same. Jesus is passionate about you and loves you perfectly, and loved you to the very end of His life! John writes in Rev. 1 and 13 that Jesus was slain for you from before the foundation of the world and that He has washed you from your sins in His own blood. And remember, the Father did not have to make His Son go to the cross. Jesus was a willing sacrifice. And even more, Jesus was an eager sacrifice. Somewhere in the eons of eternity past before Jesus was slain, the psalmist records His words to His Father. He said, “I delight to do Your will, O Lord” (Ps. 40:8). Jesus delighted to go to the cross for you. Someone put it this way a number of years ago, “Jesus would rather have died than live without you”, and that is absolutely true.

Charles Weigle was a Baptist evangelist who preached during the mid-twentieth century. One night he came home from a crusade and found a note from his wife. In it she explained that she was tired of the life of a preacher’s wife, and she was gone.

And Charles was crushed to the very core of his being. The next few years were a time of great despair. But the love of Jesus wouldn't let Charles go, and he finally began to climb out of the dark pit he had been in for so long. And at some time during his journey back to his faith and joy he sat down and wrote the words that became a song of encouragement to thousands:

I would love to tell you what I think of
 Jesus,
 Since I found in Him a friend so strong
 and true;
 I would tell you how He changed my life
 completely,
 He did something that no other friend
 could do.

No one ever cared for me like Jesus,
 There's no other friend so kind as He;
 No one else could take the sin and
 darkness from me,
 O how much He cared for me.

Child of God, Jesus cares for you!!

Now, in the remainder of our text we see three precious truths about Jesus that point to the fact that He loves His own unto the end. And I want us to look at each one of them briefly. First of all, I want us to notice the **mighty control of Jesus**. Look again at vs. 3-4. John writes that in His last hours He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands. That simply means that up until the very last breath that Jesus breathed on the cross, He was in control. But this should not surprise us, for Jesus had been in control all of His life. We read in Matt. 8 that Jesus was in control of nature. When He calmed the angry sea the disciples marveled and said, "Who can this be, that even the winds and sea obey Him?" We read in Matt. 4 where Jesus is in control over sickness, as He healed all sicknesses and diseases that people had who came to Him. We read in Luke 4:30 that Jesus was in control of human activity. When an angry mob was about to throw Him over a cliff, He supernaturally shut off their wills and just walked away right through their midst. He just cast a holy spell on them all and they became like zombies. And we read in Luke 10:19 that Jesus has control over all demonic power. And our Lord Jesus Christ even had control over the time of His own death and resurrection! He said in John 10:18 that no one would take His life from Him, for He had the power to lay it down and take it up again.

But Jesus not only has authority over all things, but He also knew where He came from and where He was going. He was on mission from Heaven and that was where He was about to return. And He knew that He would return to all the glory and honor that was His from the very beginnings of eternity.

Beloved, do you see what this means? Our Lord Jesus Christ was never a victim. To the contrary, He was the victor, from start to finish on the road to Calvary. And so you see, He had no need to cling to His exalted status among the disciples, for there was no way He would ever, ever lose it. And therefore He could freely stoop down and assume the role of their slave and wash their feet. And that's just exactly what Jesus did. For in the East a towel girded about the waist was an unmistakable sign of slavery. What humility, what love, when He had all authority to order any one of them to wash His feet, along with all the rest! But the King of Kings and Lord of Lords had already said in Luke 22:27, "I am among you as one who serves".

And beloved, do you realize that Jesus is still serving you? He surely is. Right now, if you are saved by His grace, He is serving you by praying for you (Heb. 7:25). Right now He is serving you by preparing a place for you in Heaven (Jn. 14:2). Right now He is serving you by meeting every temporal need (Phil. 4:19). Right now Jesus is serving you by giving you comfort if you will receive it (Phil. 2:1). Right now He is giving you strength if you will receive it (Phil. 4:13). And do you know that Jesus will even continue to serve you in eternity? Luke 12:37 says that at the marriage supper of the Lamb that the Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, will make His bride, you and me, to sit down, and He will once more gird Himself and come and serve us. Matchless, unspeakable love!

But we see Jesus' marvelous love in another way at the Passover Supper. And that is by His **mysterious cleansing** (vs. 6-10). As Jesus made His way to each disciple to wash their feet, it's not hard to guess who would be the one to resist Him. Simon Peter. Impetuous, foot-in-the-mouth Simon Peter. Perhaps Peter was feeling guilty for not volunteering to wash everyone's feet that night. He should have been. But when Jesus got to Peter he emphatically declared, "You will never wash my feet!" And literally he said, "**No! No!**, shall You wash **my** feet, into the **ages!**" The Griffin paraphrase would be, "Jesus, You will not wash my feet until the stars fall out of the sky". And then Jesus gently replied, "If I do not wash your feet then you have nothing to do with Me". Then Peter abruptly did an about face. He cried out, "Lord, don't just wash my feet, wash me all over!" And for all of Peter's foolhardiness so many times, you've got to love his heart. Peter had a passion for Jesus Christ!

But what did Jesus mean when He told Peter that unless He washed Peter's feet that Peter could have nothing to do with Him? Well, this is where the mystery of the cleaning comes in. Jesus was not saying, "Peter, I'm just too much of a clean freak to associate with anyone who refuses to keep clean feet". No, Jesus is talking about a **spiritual cleansing**. And what Jesus tells Peter is this, "Unless I cleanse you from your sins I can't have fellowship with you". Now, we must understand that

Jesus is not talking to Peter about his salvation. Peter is saved. He had been cleansed from the penalty of eternal death when he first met Jesus. In the NKJV Jesus describes that cleansing as “being bathed”. Look at vs. 10. The Greek verb for “being bathed” is different Greek verb than the verb for “wash” in vs. 8 and vs. 10. It means to be cleansed from head to toe, and it speaks of the salvation experience. And Jesus says those who have been bathed, that is, who have been saved, needs only to wash their feet. In other words, they don’t need to be saved again. They just need a cleansing from daily sins to remain in fellowship with Him.

There are some Christians who wonder why they don’t have the joy and the power in their lives that other Christians seem to have. Let me tell you, beloved, the answer is not rocket science. It is not because they are God’s red headed stepchild. God doesn’t have any red headed step children. Acts 10:34 says that God shows no partiality. If anyone sincerely desires a close walk with Jesus but doesn’t have it, it is because they have dirty feet and they won’t let Jesus wash them. It is because they refuse to allow Jesus to wash them from their sin. And beloved, a holy Jesus simply cannot walk in fellowship with any child of His that refuses to let go of their sin. God says in Amos 3:3, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”

But I want to take the dirty feet analogy a bit further. Why do you suppose that some Christians are like Peter and refuse for Jesus to wash their dirty feet? One reason is that they are afraid that Jesus might be too rough with their feet in the washing process. Will He scrub till it hurts? And sometimes the answer is “yes”. Sometimes Jesus’ chastisement is painful, but it is always for our good. And then some are afraid that if they have clean feet they cannot hang out with people with dirty feet anymore. And this is true as well. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, and do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you (2 Cor. 6:17). But here’s the most pitiful reason. Some Christians have had dirty feet so long they actually have become accustomed to the way their feet look and smell, and in a perverted way they like having dirty, smelly feet. They like going to the bars and the casinos and the PG13 movies, with all the profanity, sex, and violence.

The sight and smell of their feet makes everyone else sick, but not them. They’ve become settled in their sin and they say, “No, Jesus, don’t wash my feet!”

I wonder, do you have dirty feet today? Are you out of fellowship with Jesus because you refuse to let Him do a work of cleansing in your life? Oh, beloved, I beg you if you are, let Jesus wash your dirty feet! Let Him free you from the sin that destroys your walk and your witness, and let Him use you and glorify Himself through you once again. May the Holy Spirit give grace to every one of God’s children to cry out for cleansing today, and every day. What a different world it would be!

Now, I want us to stop for a few moments and see an important truth that God would have us to learn about the Christian life here. Notice what Jesus said to Peter when Peter resisted His foot washing. “What I am doing you do not understand now,

but you will know after this". And at some point later, probably after the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter did understand what Jesus was doing. But he just couldn't figure it out when it was happening.

Beloved, that is the way it is so many times in the school of God! God is working with every one of His children, teaching us, sanctifying us, molding us more and more into the image of Jesus. But often times God's teaching methods are not the way we would do it ourselves. His methods don't make sense to us and they are painful to us, and sometimes we feel like crying out just like Job and saying, "God has delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over to the hands of the wicked. I was at ease, but He has shattered me. He also has taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces.." (Job 16:11-12).

If you perhaps feel like that today, I want to tell you that God is saying to you, just like Jesus said to Peter, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this". Beloved, God is a sovereign God! And though we don't understand exactly how, God is in the captain's seat steering your life exactly the way it needs to go for your good and His glory. That's your ultimate destination, your good and His glory. Now, all of us grab hold of the wheel and get ourselves in trouble from time to time, sometimes deep trouble. But He always grabs it back and takes us in the direction we need to go. And sometimes that is through rough waters of His choosing. That's certainly the way it was with Job. That's certainly the way it was with Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers and then wrongfully thrown into prison in a foreign land. But you know what happened in the end. God raised up Joseph to second behind Pharaoh as ruler over all Egypt.

Now, I am not saying that every time we don't understand the workings of God something absolutely great will happen later on. John the Baptist bears witness to that. When he got thrown in jail it was a different ending for him than Joseph, for he lost his head. But I am saying this. God has a perfect plan for your life. And if you are seeking to walk with Him, when things happen that you don't understand He is saying to you, "Trust Me! I am in control, I love you, and I will not let you sink in your ocean of trouble!" In Jeremiah 23 God rebukes the false prophets in Israel for deceiving the people. They were prophesying that God would not punish the wicked, when God said no such of a thing. And listen to what God said to His people about the false prophet's lies: "The anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly." God says, you don't understand what's going on now, but like the old hymn says, "You'll understand it better by and by".

We've seen the Jesus' marvelous love toward His disciples through His **mighty control** and His **mysterious cleansing**. But I want us to quickly see one more way Jesus declared His love to His own today, and that is by His **masterful connection**. Look again at vs. 14 & 15. Jesus said, "Men, what I've done for you tonight is more than just a favor. I washed your feet as an example for you, that you would go out

and wash others' feet." Now, certainly Jesus is teaching His disciples a lesson in service here. And heaven knows they needed it, for every one of them was too proud to assume the role of a household slave and to wash his brothers' nasty feet when they first entered the room. And just as He humbled Himself to become their servant, so should they humble themselves to be servants of others, and so should we.

But there is another truth about servanthood that God would not have us miss. Jesus would say to every born again child of God, "I have called you to wash the feet of your brothers and sisters. I have called you to help them to be cleansed from their sins, to help them to be right with me (Gal. 6:1). But if you do this, you must stoop to be their servants". You know, so many of us are quick to condemn others. We are quick to yell down advice from our ivory towers. But Jesus says, if you really want to wash someone's feet, to really help change someone's life, then be their servant!! Servants are the ones who wash feet. Servants are the ones who lead others to the cleansing fountain of the Holy Spirit. And notice in vs. 17 the promise that Jesus makes to all who would be servants. The word "blessed" means "happy".

Are you a disciple of Jesus? Are you saved? Beloved, if you are Jesus has loved you to the very end. He has loved you perfectly all the way to the finish line, all the way to the cross. And He wants to make you happy, and He has shown you the way, by being a servant. Will you be a servant?