

CHRIST'S "NEW COMMANDMENT"

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*"A new commandment I give unto you,
 That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.
 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."
 John 13:34-35*

I CAN never doubt, or for a moment distrust, the affection of my dear people to myself. I certainly do not ask for any more of your love, for I have as much as one man ought to have—perhaps a little more—certainly a great deal more than I deserve. I can now fairly turn round and say to you, putting myself altogether on one side, "Let brotherly love continue, and let the warmth of your affection the one towards the other increase."

And I can say this, too, without anybody daring to insinuate that there is something wrong in the church—some division or schism here. Blessed be God, I do not think that a microscopic eye could discover anything of the kind. There may be some of you who do not like certain persons quite as much as you like other people. I do not wonder at that, for there will always be some partialities even among the best of friends.

Our Lord Jesus Himself had twelve apostles, and out of the twelve, three specially favored ones. And out of the three, one who leaned upon His bosom. There are some people who are more lovable than other people and we can hardly help loving them more than others. Still, I know of no special reason of that kind why I should preach this sermon. I bless the Lord that you are as loving as you are, and pray that you may increase more and more in your love to one another.

I am going to speak upon our text thus. First, *the title which our Lord gave to this commandment*. He called it "a new commandment." Secondly, *the example by which He expounded it*, "That ye love one another; as I have loved you." And thirdly, *the result by which He enforced it*, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

I. First, then, THE TITLE WHICH CHRIST GAVE TO THIS COMMANDMENT, "a new commandment."

Many of you, I do not doubt, have heard the story of Archbishop Usher and Mr. Rutherford. But it is so appropriate to this subject that I cannot help telling it again. The archbishop had heard of the wondrous power of Rutherford's devotion, and of the singular beauty of the arrangement of his household, and he wished to witness it himself. But he could not tell how to do so until it occurred to him that he might disguise himself as a poor traveler.

Accordingly, at nightfall, he knocked at the door of Mr. Rutherford's house and was received by Mrs. Rutherford. He asked if he could find lodgings there for the night, to which she answered, "Yes," for they entertained strangers. She placed him in the kitchen and gave him something to eat. It was a part of her regular family discipline, on Saturday evening, to catechize the children and the servants, and of course, the poor man in the kitchen came in among them.

Mrs. Rutherford put to all of them some questions concerning the commandments, and to this poor man she put the question, "How many commandments are there?" And he answered, "Eleven." "Ah!" she said, "what a sad thing that a man of your age, whose hair is sprinkled with grey, should not even

know how many commandments there are, for there is not a child above six years old in our parish who does not know that."

The poor man said nothing in reply, but he had his oatmeal porridge and went to bed. Later, he rose and listened to Rutherford's midnight prayer. He was charmed with it, made himself known to him, borrowed a better coat from him, preached for him on the Sunday morning, and surprised Mrs. Rutherford by taking as his text, "A new commandment I give unto you," and by commencing with the observation that this might very properly be called the eleventh commandment. By-and-by, the archbishop went on his way, and he and Rutherford had been refreshed together. It is the eleventh commandment and if, the next time we are asked how many commandments there are, we answer, "Eleven," we shall reply rightly enough.

But why is it a new commandment? Is it not included in the ten? You know how our Lord approved the lawyer's summary of the ten commandments, "You shall love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." How is this a new commandment then, "That ye love one another"?

It is new, first, *as to the extent of the love*. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves, but we are to love our fellow Christians as Christ loved us, and that is far more than we love ourselves. Christ loved us better than He loved Himself, for He loved us so much that He gave Himself for us, so that now no one of us is to say, "I am to love my friend, my brother, my fellow creatures as I love myself," but to interpret Christ's command thus, "I am to love my fellow Christians even as Jesus Christ, who died for me, has loved me."

This is a nobler kind of love altogether to the love which we are to manifest to our neighbors. That is the love of benevolence, but this is a love of affinity and close relationship, and involves a higher degree of self-sacrifice than was enjoined by the law of Moses, or than would have been understood by the bulk of mankind to have been intended by the precept which bids us love one another even as we love ourselves.

Next, it is a new commandment *because it is backed by a new reason*. The old commandment was backed by this declaration, "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The Israelite was to obey that law because of the redemption which God had wrought for his nation in Egypt, but we are commanded to love one another because Christ has redeemed us from a far worse bondage than that of Egypt, and with a far costlier sacrifice than the offering up of myriads of paschal lambs.

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." He has brought us out from under the iron yoke of sin and Satan, and has broken our bonds asunder. Our enemies have pursued us, but He has destroyed them at the sea, even at the Red Sea. He has redeemed us with His own heart's blood, and therefore His new commandment comes to us with the greatest possible force, "That ye love one another as I have loved you."

It is a new commandment because of the extent of it and also because of the reason by which it is supported.

It is a new commandment, also, *because it is a new love, springing from a new nature, and embracing a new nature*. I am bound, as a man, to love my fellow man because he is a man. But I am bound, as a regenerate man, to love my fellow Christian still more because he also is regenerate. The ties of blood ought to be recognized by us far more than they are. We are too apt to forget that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." So that by the common tie of blood, we are all brethren.

But beloved, the ties of grace are far stronger than the ties of blood. If you are really born of God, you are brothers by a brotherhood that is stronger even than the natural brotherhood which enabled you to lie in the same cradle and to hang at the same breast, for brothers according to the flesh may be eternally separated. The right hand of the King may be the position accorded to the one and his left hand

may be the position assigned to the other. But brothers, who are truly born of God, share a brotherhood which must last forever. They who are now brothers in Christ shall always be brothers.

It is a very blessed thing when we are able to love one another, because the grace that is in any one of us sees the grace that is in another, and discerns in that other, not the flesh and blood of the Savior, but such a resemblance to Christ that it must love that other one for His sake. As it is true that, if we are of the world, the world will love its own, so is it true that if we are of the Spirit, the Spirit will love His own. The whole redeemed family of Christ is firmly bound together. Born of God ourselves, we keep looking out to see others who have been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." And when we do see them, we cannot help loving them. There is a bond of union between us at once.

There are certain brethren who hold that communion among Christians ought to be restricted—they say that if believers are disobedient, especially with regard to baptism, they ought not to be communed with. I do not judge my brethren who hold those views, but I do not hesitate to tell them that they hold views which it is quite impossible for them to carry out. If they are themselves in the body of Christ, they must of necessity commune with all the other members of the mystical body of Christ—they cannot help themselves.

Suppose that my little finger has been properly washed and cleansed, but that the rest of my hand is not so clean, and that, therefore, my finger holds it to be its duty to shut off the rest of my hand from communion with itself? It cannot do it—it is impossible unless it is severed from the hand. It must commune with the rest of the body, whether it is washed or unwashed. You may deny your friend the outward form of fellowship because he is unbaptized, but you cannot deny him the inner fellowship which is much more important.

You are allied to God and therefore you must have fellowship with all others who are allied to God, whether you like it or not. It is not a thing which your church discipline can touch—it can no more be bound than can the waves of air which are constantly in motion. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and the divine breath of fellowship comes where it pleases, and the life of God will manifest itself in all the members of the body of Christ, neither can you by any possibility restrain it.

The love which Christ commands His followers to have towards one another is not the ordinary love of man to man as such, but the love of the new-born man to the new-born man. Let us, who love the Lord, love each other fervently in that sense. This is a love which arises out of a totally new union. A man who is a Christian belongs to a very special family. That family circle does not comprehend the whole human race—it is a family inside the larger human family, yet separated from it by an inner spiritual life.

What if I say that the distance between the saved and the unsaved is like a great gulf? It is true that by the almighty grace of God, there is a way across that gulf and many pass over it—still, the gulf is very deep and broad. But the moment a man is born unto God, he enters that inner circle and becomes a member of a new family. Within that sacred circle of electing love, all bonds of nationality are sundered forever.

There, we are no longer Frenchmen or Englishmen, Americans or Russians, black or white, bond or free, but we are "all one in Christ Jesus." There, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails. There, the barbarian is no less and the Greek is no more than any other member of the redeemed family. We are brethren because, in Christ, we are all in one family and hence it is that we are called to a new kind of love—a love which is like the love of the brothers of the same house, only more sublime, and with better reasons lying at the bottom than even the love of consanguinity can boast.

And beloved friends, this is a new commandment *because it is enforced by new necessities*. Christians ought to love one another because they are the subjects of one King, who is also their Savior. We are a little band of brothers in the midst of a vast multitude of enemies. "Behold," said Christ to His disciples, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves."

If you are true Christians, you will not have the love of worldlings—you cannot have it. They will be sure to ridicule you, and call you fools, or hypocrites, or something equally uncomplimentary. Well,

then, cling the more closely to one another. Whatever opposition you meet with outside, let it only weld you into a firmer union the one with the other. We are like a small company of soldiers, in an enemy's country, strongly garrisoned by the vast battalions of the foe, so we must hold together—we must be as one man, banded together in closest fellowship—as our Great Captain bids us. God grant that the very fact that we are found in an enemy's country may result in making us more completely one than we have ever been before!

When I hear a Christian man finding fault with his minister, I always wish that the devil had found somebody else to do his dirty work. I hope that none of you will ever be found complaining of God's servants who are doing their best to help their Lord's cause. There are plenty who are ready to find fault with them and it is much better that their faults—if they have faults—should be pointed out by an enemy rather than by you who belong to the same family as they do.

Even if you should know that a professor is a hypocrite, it may be the duty of a Christian to say, "Let him fall by the hand of another. I would rather not give evidence against him." When I hear my Master say, "One of you shall betray me," I may have a shrewd suspicion that He refers to Judas, but it will be wiser for me to say, "Lord, is it I?" rather than to ask, "Lord, is it Judas?"

Further, dear brethren, this is a new commandment *because it is suggested by new characteristics*. In our fellow men, there *may* be something lovable, but in our fellow Christians, there *must* be something lovable. Suppose they are only newly born to God—for my part, I hardly know of a more beautiful sight than a newborn Christian. I like to hear the prayer of the one who is just converted—there may be much of mistake and imperfection in it, but that does not spoil it. A lamb does not bleat in quite the same tones that a sheep uses, yet a lamb is a very beautiful object and one likes to hear its feeble notes.

And there is a beauty about the lambs in Christ's flock as well as about the full-grown sheep. There is nothing more lovely to be seen in the whole world than an aged believer, who has lived very near to God. How calm is the old gentleman's spirit—and when he begins to talk about the things of God and to testify concerning the love of his Lord—how charmingly he talks!

There is much that is beautiful about all true Christians, so try and search out their excellences rather than their defects. If we are ourselves in a right state of heart, we are all the more likely to admire that which is good in others, just as Mercy and Christiana, when they came up from their bath, admired one another. I would advise you, beloved, to imitate those gracious women. There is a beauty about your friend that there is not about yourself. Do not be always gazing in the mirror—there are fairer sights to be seen than any you will find there. Look into your fellow Christian's face, and as you see anything there that is the work of the Spirit, love him because of that.

And once more, *this is a new commandment because it is a preparation for better prospects than we have ever enjoyed before*. We, who believe in Jesus, are going to live together in heaven forever and ever, so we may as well be good friends while we are here. We shall see each other there in one common glory and be occupied forever in one common employment—the adoration of our Lord and Master. The remembrance of this truth ought to break down many of the barriers which at present exist in society.

There was a wealthy Christian, a man who stood very high in social position, who was in the habit of picking out godly people of a far lower class than that to which he himself belonged. He would bring home to his table the husbandman from the plow, or the smith from the smithy, and one of his rich friends ridiculed him for seeking such associates. But he replied, "I do not think you ought to ridicule me for picking out those who are, socially, lower than myself, for those whom I have brought to my table are men and women who, I believe, will be nearer to the throne of God in heaven than I shall be. They are very poor, but they are better, more pious, and more gracious than I am, so I thought that I might as well pick the best company I could while I was here—and associate with them."

I like that gentleman's idea, and I can also bear witness that I have often learned more in an hour's conversation with a godly poor man, than I have learned from an educated man who has known but little of the things of God. Never judge men by the clothes they wear, but by what they are in themselves. It is

a man's heart and above all, it is the grace of God that dwells within the man's heart that you and I are to prize and love—may God help us so to do!

Thus, I think I have said enough concerning the new commandment which Christ gave to His disciples.

II. Now I must pass on to the second point—THE EXAMPLE BY WHICH CHRIST EXPOUNDED THIS NEW COMMANDMENT. "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

First, *Christ loved them unselfishly*. He certainly had nothing to gain from associating with them and nothing to learn from them. It is true that He used them to help in the extension of His cause, but He first made them fit to be used. He owed nothing to them and they owed everything to Him.

There was nothing in them when He first called them—and to the very last there was nothing good in them except what His grace had put there—and there was not nearly as much of that as there ought to have been, for He had to say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" Christians, you also are to love one another, not because of the gain which you get from one another, but rather because of the good you can do to one another.

I once heard a minister speak very grumblingly of the Baptist denomination. He said, "I do not know what the denomination ever did for me." I could not help thinking to myself, "Well now, that is a question which has never occurred to me and probably never will. The question that has occurred to me is, What can I do for the denomination?" And I think that is the kind of question which every Christian minister ought to ask, not only concerning the denomination, but concerning Christians in general.

We ought not to ask, "What can these people do for me?" No, put the boot on the other leg, and say, "What can I do for these people?" If you want to love a man, you must not get him to do you a kindness, but you must do a kindness to him and then you will love him. You cannot do good to another person without finding growing up in your heart some degree of interest in the person to whom you have done that good.

It is possible that a child may forget its mother, forget that it drew its life, and its nourishment, and all the comforts of its infancy from its mother, but the mother does not forget that she reared it in its weakness and brought it up to strength. If you want to love a person, do some loving thing for that person and love will spring up in your soul to that person. Our Lord Jesus Christ loved His disciples unselfishly—let us do the same.

He also loved them very trustingly, for though He was not unwise and put no confidence in man, yet I might slightly alter one of our hymns and say, concerning our Lord, "Oh, see how Jesus did trust unto Himself unto the childish love of His disciples!" He never wore any armor when He was alone with them. In the midst of skeptical scribes and Pharisees, we can see Him standing like a man on His guard, with His sword drawn in His hand, but as soon as He gets among His own followers, He opens His heart to them, and tells them many things that He does not tell others—so many, indeed, that He once said to them, "If it were not so, I would have told you," as if He had no secrets from them, but unveiled His very heart to them.

Of course, you cannot do this to the full with all professing Christians, but still, when you are among your fellow Christians, do not always go about suspecting everybody. I would sooner be taken in a thousand times than I would unjustly suspect one true-hearted man. It is a shameful thing for any one of you to move among your fellow Christians and to be saying in your hearts, "I am afraid that many of them are hypocrites."

Sir, I am greatly afraid that you are yourself a hypocrite, for most men measure other people's corn with the bushel that they keep at home. So, if you think ill of other people, the sin is probably in yourself. I have often said that, if there is any place where I am quite at home, it is among my own congregation.

*"There my best friends, my kindred, dwell;
There God my Savior reigns."*

There must be a hearty spirit of trustfulness between those who love the same Christ or else a lasting union between them is impossible.

Next, *Christ loved His disciples sympathetically*. He grieved with them in their griefs and rejoiced with them in their joys. He entered into most intimate fellowship with them in their varied experiences. Let us try to do the same with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice. Nothing tends so greatly to oil the wheels of life as a little loving sympathy—let us be always ready with a good supply of it wherever it is needed.

Our Lord also loved His disciples patiently. They must often have grieved Him by their ignorance and unbelief. If any of us had been in His place, we should have said, "You set of stupids, we cannot bear with you any longer." But our loving Lord did not talk like that. After He had told them the truth twenty times and yet they did not know it, He went on in the same fashion and told it to them again and again until they did know it.

As He was so patient with His disciples, it ill becomes us, who are ourselves so imperfect, to say concerning any of our fellow Christians, "I cannot feel any affection for So-and-so," or "I cannot have any communion with So-and-so." Do you talk like that because you perceive some imperfection in them? But my dear brother, have not you also many imperfections? It may be that some other person is looking upon you in the same cold light in which you are looking upon him and that he is finding as much fault with you as you are finding with him. If so, it is a great pity that any of us should be impatient with one another when our Lord Jesus Christ is so patient with us.

Once more, *our Lord loved His disciples practically*. His love did not consist in the mere effervescence of transient emotion or in kind words only, but He loved them deeply and shared all that He had with them. He even condescended to wash their feet as though He had been their servant. What more could He do for them?

Yet He did far more than that, for He laid down His life for them. He gave up all He had for them. He gave up all the members of His body and all the faculties of His soul—His entire nature—that He might save His people. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." "As I have loved you," said He, "even so love ye one another." What a marvelous exposition of the precept the whole life and death of Jesus Christ make up for us! May we have the grace to follow where the path is so plainly marked out for us!

III. And now, thirdly, I am to speak of THE RESULT BY WHICH THE PRECEPT IS ENFORCED. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Among all of them who know that we are Christ's disciples, there is one very important person, and that is yourself. If you have love towards Christ's disciples, *you will know that you are one of His disciples*, for how does the beloved apostle John put it? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It will be one of the clearest evidences to your own heart that you are really a disciple of Jesus when you realize that, for Christ's sake, you love the whole redeemed family of God. By this test shall all men know that you are His disciples and you shall begin by knowing it yourself.

By this test shall your fellow Christians also know that you are Christ's disciples. I do not know of anything which more commends a Christian to his fellow Christians than a true spirit of love. I have read many controversial works and I have admired the force of the arguments in many of them. But when I have read them, I have not gathered from the perusal that the writers on either side were very eminently followers of Christ. They may have been—it was no business of mine to judge as to that matter. They may have been showing other precious qualities while they were contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, but the grace of Christian charity has not always been very manifest.

For instance, if you read the controversy between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Toplady—well, I do not know which was the worse of the two—they could both say a thing very sharply when they tried and the devil helped them to make it even sharper. Yet they were both of them good men and it was not according to the nature of either of them to say anything bad of the other.

It is quite a relief to notice how Mr. Whitefield conducted his controversy with Mr. Wesley. As I have read it, I have said to myself, "This man is a Christian and no mistake." It is reported that Mr. Whitefield was one day asked by a partisan, "Do you think that we, when we get to heaven, shall see John Wesley there?" "No," said George Whitefield, "I do not think we shall." The questioner was very delighted with that answer, but Mr. Whitefield added, "I believe that Mr. John Wesley will have a place so near the throne of God and that such poor creature as you and I will be so far off as to be hardly able to see him."

As I read such remarks made by Mr. Whitefield, I have said to myself, "By this I know, as a Christian, that he must be a Christian," for I saw that he loved his brother Wesley even while he so earnestly differed from him on certain points of doctrine. Yes, dear brethren, if we cannot differ, and yet love one another—if we cannot allow each brother to go his own way in the service of God and to have the liberty of working after his own fashion—if we cannot do that, we shall fail to convince our fellow Christians that we ourselves are Christians.

But the point of our Savior's remark is here, "By this shall *all men* know that ye are my disciples." That is to say, *the outside world will know it*. Let me tell you a remarkable instance of this. In the early days of Christianity, a terrible plague broke out in Alexandria. It was very dangerous to be near a person smitten with the disease and to touch such a person meant almost certain death.

When the pest broke out, the heathen in Alexandria thrust out of their houses every person who had the slightest sign of the disease upon him, and left them to starve, and would not even bury their bodies for fear of contagion. But the Christians visited one another when they were sick with the pest and no Christian was left to die unattended.

They were zealous to go and visit each other, although they knew that they should, in all probability, catch the contagion. And among the carcasses outside the walls of Alexandria there was not found one single corpse of a Christian, for, with sedulous care, they committed the bodies of their beloved to the earth in the sure and certain hope of resurrection unto eternal life.

And the heathen said to one another, "What is the meaning of this?" And the answer went throughout all Egypt, "This is the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, for these Christians love one another." No sermon can be so eloquent to the world as a true manifestation of the love of Christ. And when God restores to His church genuine, hearty, and sincere Christian love—I trust we have not wholly lost it—but when He gives us much more of it, then shall the world be more impressed by the Gospel than it is at present.

I will tell you an anecdote. It is one which, I fear, might be multiplied a thousand times and yet be true. During a revival, a young woman came into a certain congregation and was impressed by the services. She heard that the Christian church was the home of union and love—in fact, a little heaven. And perhaps more charmed by the beauty of the church than by the beauty of Christ, she joined the fellowship of believers there.

After a little while, she heard some Christians speaking very bitterly of others. Indeed, speaking of the faults of others, not at all as if they grieved over them, but as though they rather rejoiced to have something to say against their fellow Christians. Immediately the thought crossed the mind of the young woman, "I have been deceived. The Christian church is not the holy and happy family that I believed it to be."

That conviction led to doubts upon many of the doctrines that she had been taught there. She soon neglected the means of grace and then became skeptical concerning the Savior Himself. All this followed from finding disagreement where she had hoped to find Christian love and union. It pleased the Lord to bring her, at last, back to the Savior's feet, but for many years she was the subject of great doubt and inward struggle, and the occasion of it was the want of love among Christians.

O beloved, do not let it be so among you! If ours is not a loving church, I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nought. If you love not one another, surely you do not love the Savior. But if you are knit together in love, then is our joy fulfilled in you and Christ also rejoices over you.

I have finished my discourse when I have said a word or two to those who are out of the family of Christ. It must be a very sad thing not to be a member of the family of which the Head is the loving Lord Himself—where the law that governs the family is the rule of love and where the distinguishing mark of every member of the family is love one to another. And if it be true that we must either belong to that family, or else belong to another family, of which Cain, who slew his brother, was the firstborn son, it makes it a very solemn matter.

There are two seeds in the world and if you do not belong to Christ, the living seed, you belong to the serpent's seed. Woe to the man who is not of the family of God! Egypt had to weep and wail on that very night when Israel, beneath the blood-sprinkled lintel, could afford to sing and shout. And when the day comes for God to let loose the angel of vengeance, woe unto you unless you belong to the family of love—to the host of the living God!

"How can I get love?" asks one. Love comes by the way of faith. First trust the Master and then you will soon learn to love His servants. Rely upon the Savior and you will then feel an affection for all the saved ones. Commit yourself now into the hands that were pierced for sinners and you will soon joyfully give a loving embrace to those for whom Christ's precious blood was shed. May we all meet in heaven, where love reigns supreme, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 13:1-17

Verse 1. *Now before the feast of the passover,—*

Or, just as it was about to begin,—

1. *When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

That is a very beautiful description of Christ's death, "His hour was that he should depart out of this world unto the Father"—just as though He was merely going on a journey, leaving one land for another. And if this be a fair description of such a stormy passage as that of our Lord Jesus, who died for our sins upon Calvary's cross, it must with equal truth describe the death of any of the children of God.

There is also an appointed time for us to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better than remaining here. The loosing of the cable, the spreading of the sail, the crossing over the narrow sea, the coming to the eternal haven, and the abiding there—what Christian heart needs to dread this? How much better is it even to look forward to it with ardent anticipation!

Think much of the abiding love of Christ, "Having loved his own"—His by election, His by redemption, for He regarded that as already done which was about to be accomplished, "Having loved his own which were in the world"—not yet in heaven, but still in the midst of trial, still imperfect, even as you and I are, "He loved them unto the end," or, "unto the perfection," as it might be rendered. The Alpha of His love which we find in eternity, bids us believe that we shall find the Omega of it nowhere but there.

2-4. *And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.*

Notice the wonderful contrast revealed to us in these verses. Our Lord Jesus Christ had a very vivid realization that He had come from God and was going back to God, and that all things had been given into His hand. Yet, while He knew that, and had a more than ordinary consciousness of His own dignified nature and position, He condescended to wash His disciples' feet.

Though many years elapsed between the event and the time when John recorded it, all the details seem to have been still present in his memory so that he distinctly mentions each separate act, He riseth from supper, and layeth aside His upper garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself.

5. *After that he poureth water into a basin,—*

The one that ordinarily stood in the guest chamber for the washing of the hands and feet of the guests.

5-6. *And began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?*

You must lay the stress on the pronouns in order to get the full force of the original. "Lord, dost THOU wash my feet?" The contrast is between Peter's Master and himself.

7-8. *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter said unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet.*

That is, "Never, as long as I live, shall You do such a thing as that."

8-10. *Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.*

We have often, in commenting, noticed Peter's fault. Perhaps we have noticed that too much. Let us now notice Peter's excellence. I admire his humility in thinking it too mean an office for Christ to wash his feet. It seems to me to be a most proper feeling which prompted him to ask, "Dost thou wash my feet?" It seemed an overwhelming condescension of love which he could scarcely permit.

No doubt he spoke too positively when he said to Christ "Thou shalt never wash my feet," but still, his motive in speaking thus was a good one. It was because he could not allow his Lord to stoop so low—he thought it ill manners to permit such an One as Christ to wash the feet of such an one as the poor fisherman, Peter.

I have already said that there was something that was not right, and yet that was perfectly natural to this "rock" disciple, and this "dove" disciple, who was such a strange mixture of boastfulness and fickleness. Yet do not forget how much of good there was in him. I wish all of us were half as good as Peter.

That was a grand utterance, "Wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." He meant, "Lord, let me have all the cleansing I can, not only such as the washing of my feet would bring, but such as the washing of my head and my hands also would bring. Let me be clear of everything which would prevent full fellowship with You, for I long to be one with You altogether."

Then our Savior meekly, gently, quietly, explained that there was no need for the washing of his head and his hands, for his whole being had already been renewed by the one great act of regeneration. And as he had been cleansed from sin by the free gift of pardon at the time when he first believed, there was no need of any repetition of the spiritual bathing. All that was required was the washing of his feet—a beautiful distinction always to be observed.

He that believes in Christ is fully forgiven. He is like a man who has gone into the bath and washed, but when he steps out of the bath and puts his foot on the ground, he often soils it, so that, before he robes himself, he needs to wash his feet again. That is our condition as believers in Jesus—we are washed in His precious blood and are whiter than snow—but these feet of ours constantly touch this defiling earth, so they need every day to be washed. Hence our Lord Jesus said to Peter, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all."

11. *For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*

They were all washed so far as their feet were concerned, but not all of them had been cleansed in the sacred bath which removes the stains of sin.

12-17. *So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.*

For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verity, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Blessed are they who, when they understand the meaning of Christ's example, imitate it in their own lives.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 891, 87

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