

LOVE STRONGER THAN DEATH

NO. 2377

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“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.”
John 13:1.

THIS is a kind of preface to the story of the foot-washing, and a very wonderful preface it is, when coupled with the third and fourth verses, upon which I commented. “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God, He rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.” This is the frame of the picture that is here presented to us. To what shall I compare it? It is like unto a gate of the golden city; each gate is one distinct pearl, and surely this verse is a jewel of inestimable price. The foot-washing picture is set within this precious frame.

This memorable and symbolical act took place at the end of our Lord's sojourn here below. The Passion was the end of His life, and we may consider that the Passion was about to begin. That same night He would go to Gethsemane, and in less than twenty-four hours, the dear hands that washed the disciples' feet would be nailed to the accursed wood, and He who spoke so tenderly to His little band of followers would be in His death agonies.

It is an important thing to know how a man feels when he comes to the real crisis of his life. He has cultivated a great variety of feelings during his career; but what has been his ruling passion? You will see it now. It has passed into a proverb that, “The ruling passion is strong in death,” and there is great truth in the saying. In the light of the man's departure, we shall see what power really ruled him. It was precisely so with our Divine Master. He had almost reached the end of His earthly life; He had come to a season of awful agony; He was about to endure the great and terrible death of the cross, by which He was to purchase eternal redemption for all His people. What will be uppermost in His mind now? What will He think of His disciples now that He has so many other things to think of, now that the thought of His approaching death comes over Him, now that the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane are so near? What will Jesus think of His disciples at such a time as this, and under such circumstances as these? Our text is the answer to that question: “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.” His love was burning as brightly at the Paschal Supper as ever it burned before. Yes, and it seemed as if, in that wondrous prayer that is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, and in the wonderful discourse which accompanied it, the love of Jesus had never before flamed out so clearly before! Then were the great beacon fires lit, and the fierce winds that blew around the Savior fanned them to their full force of flame. Now can you say of Jesus, “Behold how He loved His disciples!” for even at the end of His life He still loved those whom He had loved before.

With that thought in your minds, will you follow me while I take the text to pieces, and dwell upon almost every word of it?

I. First, then, concerning our blessed Master, let us consider WITH WHOM HE ASSOCIATED, and of whom this verse now speaks. They are called, “His own.” It is a brief description, but it is wonderfully full: “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

“His own.” There was a circle—sometimes a wide circle—round the Savior, made up of publicans and sinners, and He had a measure of love to all of them, a benevolent desire to bless them; but there was an inner circle, containing the twelve apostles and some godly women, who had joined themselves unto Him. These were “His own.” To them He often expounded the hidden meaning of a parable which He left unexplained to the crowd. To them He often brought many a dainty dish which was especially reserved for their table, and not intended for the multitude. Bread and fish would do for the crowd; but

Jesus had choicer fare for “His own.” They were a special people; many knew them, many despised them, but Jesus loved them, and this was the main thing which made them “His own.”

You know how they came to be “His own.” *He chose them before the earth was.* A man may surely choose his own wife, and Christ chose His own spouse, He chose His own Church; and while the Scripture stands, that doctrine can never be eradicated from it. Before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their rounds, Christ had made His choice; and, having made it, He stood to it. He chose them for His love; and He loved them for His choice.

Having loved them, and chosen them, *He espoused them unto Himself.* “They shall be Mine,” He said; “I will be married to them, I will be bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh.” Consequently, in the fullness of time, He came here, made one with our humanity, that He might be seen to be a true Husband to “His own”—“His own” by choice, “His own” by espousal.

They were “His own” also, *for His Father gave them to Him.* The Father committed them into His hands. “Yours they were,” said Jesus, “and You gave them to Me.” The Father loved the Son, and committed all things into His hand; but He made a special committal of His own chosen people. He gave them to Him, and entered with Him into surety engagements on their behalf, that as they were His sheep, committed to His charge, He would deliver them up, and not one of them should be torn by the wolf, or die by the frost or the heat, but that all should pass again under the rod of Him that counts them. That great Shepherd of the sheep will take care of the whole flock that was entrusted to His care; He will not lose one of His sheep or lambs. At the last, Jesus will say, “Here am I, Father, and the children that You have given Me; of all that You gave Me, I have lost none.” Thus, they are “His own” by His own choice, “His own” by espousal, and “His own” by His Father’s gift.

But those whom He called “His own” were soon to be His *by a wondrous purchase.* He looked upon their redemption as being already accomplished, for in His prayer He said to His Father, “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.” Beloved friends, have you ever thought how dearly we are Christ’s by His redemption of us? “You are not your own; you are bought with a price.” Have you ever realized the price that was paid for you? I sometimes think that, if I could have been there, I would have said, “O You great and glorious Lord, I beseech You not to pay such a price for me; it is too great a sacrifice that You should be made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in You!” But He would do it. He loved us better than He loved Himself. He would do it; and He has paid the purchase price for us, and we are His; and we will not run back from the glad confession. Well may He call us “His own” when it cost Him so much to redeem us.

But we have become “His own” *by His conquest of us.* He had called His disciples by His grace; He had drawn each one of them by cords of love, and they had run after Him: and it is just so with you and me. You remember when He drew you; do you not? Can you ever forget when, at last, you yielded to the power of those bands of love, those cords of a man? Often since then have you sung—

*“Oh, happy day, that fixed my choice
On You, my Savior, and my God;
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad!
'Tis done! The great transaction’s done;
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine:
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.”*

Beloved, you are “His own” now because *you have yielded yourselves to Him.* You delight to think that you are His. There is no greater joy to you than to feel that you belong to Christ. The fact that you are truly Christ’s is the fountain of innumerable pleasures and blessings to your heart. Jesus calls us “His own”—His own sheep, His own disciples, His own friends, His own brethren, the members of His body. What a title for us to wear, “His own”! I have heard of some who have felt it an honor to be called, “The Devil’s Own.” I trust that you have escaped from such a title as that; and now you are Christ’s own. How many regiments have felt pleasure in being called the King’s Own, the Queen’s Own, the Prince’s Own! Oh, but we are HIS OWN! He owns us; He calls us “His own.” Thus He distinguishes us from the rest of mankind, and sets us apart unto Himself. “My name shall be named on them,” He says. We are “His own.” Surely, this is the highest honor that can be put upon us even in the last great day. “They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.”

Now I trust we can say that we desire to serve Christ in our vocation. I feel happy to be among the favored few whose vocation it is to serve Christ, those who are permitted to spend all their time, and all their strength, in that dear service. We are “His own”; but so are you “His own” if you believe in Him,

you also are Christ's own, up in an attic; Christ's own, at the washtub; Christ's own, in the fields at the plow; Christ's own, making the hay. I am not wandering from my subject when I say this, for Christ has "His own" among all these classes. "His own" were fishermen, "His own" cast the net into the Sea of Galilee, "His own" drew it to shore, "His own" were the poor of this world. His own, His very own, His choicest and His best friends and followers, were just such. They were unlearned and ignorant men, yet they were "His own." So the apostle says, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confuse the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence." Oh, the wondrous sovereignty of divine love! I trust that there are some here tonight whom Christ calls "His own" although they do not yet know that it is so. Bought with His blood and they are not aware of it? Chosen before the foundation of the world, and yet they have not discovered it? May the Lord reveal to you His everlasting love, and help you to make your calling and election sure from this time forth!

I have said as much as time will permit me to say about our Lord's dear associates, the disciples, whom He calls "His own."

II. Now, in the second place, you have a full description of *how Jesus had felt towards them* up to that moment: "Having loved His own."

How much can be done with one stroke of a pen! I have sometimes marveled to see how much a great artist can do by a single touch; His work has seemed unfinished, but he has come with a brush, and just thrown in a few strokes, and the canvas that was dead has seemed to live before you. Now, John is a great master of the art of word-painting, and he gives you the whole history of Christ's dealings with His disciples in these few words, "Having loved His own."

For, remember, *that is how He began with them.* They were poor and inconsiderable, but He loved them, and He showed His love to them by calling them to be His disciples. That love worked upon their hearts, and made them obedient to His call. He began by loving them. David says, "You have loved my soul out of the pit." I do not know a more beautiful description of conversion and salvation. The love of God loves us up out of the pit, and loves us to Christ. Thus Christ loved His people from the beginning, and proved His love by drawing them to Himself, and the cords He used to draw them were the bands of His love.

Having begun by loving them, *He went on teaching them;* but all His teaching was love, for they were such dull scholars, quick to forget, yet slow to remember, that He had to keep on loving them, or He would have been tired of trying to train them. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" There is a mass of love in that question. So was it when He was dealing with Thomas; in His tenderness He submitted without question to the doubting disciple's test. He said to Him, "Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." All His teaching was uttered with lips of love, and all His instruction consisted of lessons of love.

The Lord kept on loving His disciples, although *their natures were wonderfully imperfect,* all of them. There was not one among them who had what one would call an all-round nature, unless it was John, and even he was hasty in temper, and would have called down fire from heaven upon certain Samaritans. Yet the Master kept on loving them. He had made up His mind to love them, and He never ceased to love them as long as He was with them, and He has gone on loving them ever since. At the time when He was about to depart out of the world unto the Father, they still needed to have their feet washed, and He loved them enough to render even that lowly service for them. All the infirmities, the imperfections, the carnality, the dullness, and the slowness of their nature, which He saw much more clearly than they saw it, did not make Him cease to love them: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Strangest of all, when He opened His eyes, and looked into the future, and saw that *they would soon be cowardly and faithless,* He loved them all the same. He said, "All you shall be offended because of Me this night," and so it came to pass, for "they all forsook Him, and fled." He told Peter that he would deny Him three times, and so it was, yet it was true all the while, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." That sums it all up. There was never a touch of hate, there was never any anger, there was never any weariness, there was never any lukewarmness in Jesus towards His disciples; but it was always just this, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." That is the love of Christ to His chosen, and that is the love of Christ to me. I do not think

that those gentlemen who have written a “Life of Christ” could write this part of it. This is a portion of the life of Christ that needs not so much to be written as to be known in the heart, and in the soul.

How have you found Christ, my brother? If you have known Him, what has been His conduct towards you? You answer, “Love.” As for me, I never knew, I never heard of such a lover as He is; I never dreamed that He could be such as He has been to me. Oh, how I must have vexed and grieved His gracious heart, and caused Him pain; but, never, never, never once have I had anything from Him but love! “Having loved His own.” That expression sums up the whole of Christ’s conduct towards His chosen people. It is like a miniature painting; it has every feature of His character. There it is, all of it. You may apply a microscope, and look as long as you like, but you will find that it is all there. “Having loved His own.”

So then, you have seen your Lord associated with His disciples up to this point, and you have learned that He has manifested nothing else towards them but love.

III. But now, thirdly, **WHAT A CHANGE WAS COMING OVER HIM!** “Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father.”

Dear friends, it was a wonderful change that was coming over Him, for, in the first place, though it is so tenderly described here, yet *He knew that He had to die*. You do not wish me, I am sure, to tell you of all the surroundings of the cross, of all the bitterness and woe that culminated in that cup of mingled wormwood and gall. Your heart can never fail to remember the wounds He endured when suffering for you. Well, now, if you and I had to bear all that Christ had to suffer, it would engross our thoughts, we should not be able to think of anything else but that; but it did not engross our Lord’s thoughts. He still thought of “His own.” He loved “His own” unto the end. He went on with that same calm, solid, resolute love which He had shown towards them before. He set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem, but there was no flint in His heart, it had all gone into His face. He had undertaken the work of His people’s redemption, and He must go through with it. Death itself could not change His love. You know the love of which Solomon sings at the end of the Canticles: “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it;” and he says, “Love is strong as death.” Truly, in our Lord’s case, love was stronger than that death of deaths which He deigned to die that He might make us live. Now is His great “hour” of trial; but He is true to “His own” even in this dread hour. He is about to die, but He still loves “His own.”

Dear brethren, that is not all. Jesus was about to depart out of this world, *to go away from His disciples*. After a while, He would see them no more with His bodily eyes; neither would they hear His voice leading them and teaching them. It may be true that “Absence makes the heart grow fonder,” but, alas, we have met with many instances in which mortal men have quite forgotten those whom they professed to love when once the sea has rolled between them. Many hearts are dependent upon eyesight. It is a pity that it should be so, but it was not so with Christ. All the distance between earth and heaven was soon to intervene between our Lord and His disciples, but still He loved them, and He loves them still. No distance makes any difference between Jesus and “His own.”: “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

Yet, remember, that the Savior was about to undergo a very wonderful change in another respect, *He was going to the Father*. Have any of us the slightest idea of what He is now with the Father? I will not attempt to describe the supernal splendors of His throne, the glories which His redeemed delight to lay at His feet, the songs which angels and cherubim and seraphim continually present before Him; but this verse we love, and we can truly sing—

*“Now though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor lets His saints forget.”*

I cannot describe these wonderful changes of our Lord, from life to death, from death to resurrection, from resurrection to ascension, from ascension to the glories of His Father’s throne. Would all these changes make any alteration in Him? No, none of them. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

I shall try to speak of that presently, and that will be my last point; but before we come to that theme, we must see what would be the condition of “His own.” I have shown you what would be Christ’s condition, and the change that would take place in Him.

IV. Now, fourthly, **WHAT WOULD BE THEIR CONDITION?**

Why, they would remain where they were: “His own which were in the world.” To me, there seems to be a great abyss of meaning in that expression, “in the world.” Some of you know more about what

this means than others of us do. The Church of God in London is nothing but a camp in the midst of heathendom. The sooner we believe that terrible truth the better, because it is really so; and the Church of God in the world is nothing but a traveling tent in the midst of a world that lies in the wicked one. We are "in the world." Now, some of you know what it is to be "in the world." When you get home tonight, there will be little but oaths and cursing. Some of God's dear people, whom He loves with all His heart, are still in the world, seeing that which vexes them as much as Lot was vexed by the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom. "In the world!" Now, those whom Christ was about to leave in the world would be left in the midst of all the abounding wickedness, and idolatry, and blasphemy, in about as ungodly an age as man could live in; yet He left them "in the world."

Being in the world, you see, they began to be *persecuted*. They were stoned; they were shut up in prison; they were dragged into the amphitheatre to be torn apart by lions; but "He loved them unto the end." You know how that blessed eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans concludes. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In addition to being persecuted, they were liable to be severely *tempted*. All kinds of bribes were put in their way, and all sorts of pleasures and lusts were presented to them; they were men of like passions with ourselves, so those temptations were very real to them. They were "in the world," and Jesus was gone to heaven. They were "in the world" also in *affliction*. Ah, dear friends, we find that we, too, are, in this sense, "in the world." However closely we live to God, we have pains of body, and we have to grieve as we see our dear relatives suffering. We have losses and crosses because we are "in the world." God's curse still rests upon the earth: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you." You may do what you like with it, but you cannot make it stop bringing forth thorns and thistles. They will continue to spring up as surely as the dust will return to the dust from whence it was taken.

In the world, of course, they were in *great labor*, for they were left in the world to seek to convert it, or, at least, to call out the redeemed of Christ from among men by preaching the gospel to every creature. And, being "in the world," they were surrounded by *much weakness*, weakness of body and weakness of mind, always needing to call to their Lord for help. He was up there upon the throne, and they were down in the dungeon. He was up there, clothed with all power, and they were down here in all weakness.

V. NOW, HOW WILL JESUS BEHAVE TOWARDS THEM? That is our last question. We began with it, and we will finish with it. Well, here is the answer. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end;" and we may rest sure that He always will love them, and that He will never change from the tenderness of His heart towards them. "He loved them unto the end." What does that sentence mean?

I think it means, first, that *He loved them right on*. The Hebrew, "His mercy endures forever," might be rendered, "His mercy endures to the end." That is, to the end which has no end, for there never will be an end to His mercy; and His love is continual, everlasting love, it will never come to an end. Christ Himself, in His Passion, may be said to have come to an end, and He loved His disciples until His death; but it means that He loves them without any end, forever and ever. Having loved them while He was in the world with them, He loves them right straight on, and always will love them when time shall be no more.

I am sure, dear friends, you believe in the everlasting love of God towards His people. If any of you do not, you are robbing yourselves of one of the greatest comforts that are to be found in the Scriptures. If the Lord can change, where are we? Everything has gone when His everlasting love is gone. I delight to believe that the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but His kindness shall not depart from us, neither shall the covenant of His peace be removed; it stands fast forever and ever.

But the sentence may be rendered, "*He loved them to perfection*." "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to perfection." He could not love them any better; that was impossible. He could not love them more wisely; that would be out of the question. He could not love them more intensely; that is not supposable. Whatever the perfection of love may be, that Jesus Christ bestows upon His people. There is no such love in all the world as the love of Christ to His people; and if you were to gather up all the loves that ever were, of men and women, of mothers and children, of friends and

friends, and heap up all these loves, the love of Jesus is of superior quality to them all, for none of those loves are absolutely perfect, but Jesus Christ loves to perfection.

Those of you who have the Revised Version will find in the margin the following words, "*to the uttermost.*" "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost," to that which is uttermost, farthest, and most distant; or, if I turn the word in another way, "He loved them utterly," unutterably, in such a way that you cannot tell, or conceive, or describe, or imagine, how much He loved His people. He loved His people to the utmost stretch of love. So is it, there is no love like His, and, as I said just now, all the loves in the world, compressed into one, would not equal it. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost."

Now, it does seem to me that this truth ought to tempt some poor soul to wish to enjoy Christ's love. "Oh!" says one, "if I did but get that love, I would never lose it. He would love me to the uttermost. Oh, if I could but creep in among His people!" The way to discover Christ's love to you is that you should begin by trusting Him; and surely He will help you to do this. He is so true, so good, so able to save unto the uttermost, that if you will come and trust Him, trust Him wholly, trust Him now, trust Him just as you are, He will save you to the uttermost, and show His love to you to the uttermost. I have been preaching what I trust will comfort God's people, but I wish that some poor soul would come to Christ through it. I believe that is the right way to preach the gospel. Have you not noticed, in the story of the Prodigal Son, that the father said, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet," and so on, but he did not go on to say, "Feed him," do you notice what he said? It was, "Let *us* eat, and be merry." "Well, but I thought he was thinking about his son." Yes, and he says, "Let *us* eat." So, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us eat, and then sinners will begin to feel their mouths watering, and they also will want to eat, and to have a share of the feast. This is the only way to make them eat; you can bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink; but you are very likely to do so if you set another horse a-drinking. So, if you and I enjoy the sweetness of the love of Christ, there may be some in the gallery, and some downstairs who will say, "We wish that we knew it, too," and they will be wanting it; that is the way to make them eat. I pray the Lord, by His Spirit, to lead them to put their trust in this loving Savior, and each one to say—

*"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly."*

He will let you fly to His bosom; therefore—

"Come, and welcome; sinner, come."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

John 13:1-19

Verse 1. *Now before the feast of the Passover, 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.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ had a clear foresight of all He had to endure. Future things are happily hidden from our eyes. We do not even know the moment when we shall die, or how it will be. It is well that it is so; but our Lord was able to anticipate His sufferings, by knowing all about them: "Jesus knew that His hour was come." It was all appointed; and nothing happens to any of us by accident, chance is banished from the believer's creed. There is an appointed "hour" for each one of us, and it will come in due season.

"Jesus knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father." What a beautiful way of describing death! Christ's death was certainly a more trying one than ours will be, so that this description may apply to ours as well as to His.

2. *And supper being ended,*

I suppose that was the Paschal Supper.

2. *The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him;*

What a horrible purpose for Satan to put into the heart of Judas even in the presence of Jesus! I hope that the devil will not put any such purpose into your hearts or into mine while we are in this house of prayer; but no place is sacred from his intrusion, he will come in anywhere. Even where Christ Himself is at the head of the table, Judas may be sitting at that same table, and Satan may then and there put into his heart the horrible purpose of betraying his Master.

3, 4. *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He arose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.*

Notice those words, “Jesus knowing. . . He took a towel, and girded Himself.” If He had not known how great He was, there would not have been such condescension in His action; but He knew who He was, and what the Father had entrusted to Him: “The Father had given all things into His hands.” You might suppose that He would rise up, in a very dignified manner, and put on a purple robe and a golden girdle; but, instead of that, He rose from the supper table, laid aside His garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself. He knew that He had come forth from God, and that He was going back to God, and He performed this action on the way home to His Father. O dear brothers and sisters, if Christ thus stooped, how humble ought we to be! No office should be counted too lowly, no work for His servants should seem to be too humiliating, since Jesus “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 wherewith He was girded.*

You see that Jesus does His work well. He omits none of the details of it. He puts Himself in the place of a slave, and He performs a slave’s duty very thoroughly. I am afraid that, sometimes, we do our work for Him in a slovenly way; but Jesus was not satisfied with simply washing His disciples’ feet, He must do the wiping, too. I do bless Him that He did so, for this is a picture of what He has done for us. He has washed our feet; and He often repeats the gracious act. The feet that Jesus washes He will wipe; He has not begun His task without intending to finish it. I know that He will complete in my soul the work which He has undertaken, for He fulfilled on the feet of His disciples the office He had undertaken: “He began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.”

6. *Then came He to Simon Peter: and Peter said to Him, Lord, do You wash my feet?*

I do not wonder that he said that; would not you have been equally astonished had you been there? Peter had some faint idea who Christ was; he had confessed Him in such a way that Jesus had said to Him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in heaven.” Knowing so much about Christ, Peter marveled at His action; he felt so astonished that He asked, “Do You wash my feet?”

7. *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.*

I have heard this saying of our Lord applied to affliction; and it is very true that what Jesus does we do not at present understand, but we shall know by and by. I do not think, however, that this sentence is very applicable that way, for there was no affliction in having the feet washed. The fact is, brethren, though it is a very humbling thing to say, we do not understand that which Jesus does, even His simplest actions are a mystery to us, we have never gone into the very depths of them so as to comprehend them. “What I do—even though I only wash your feet, plain and simple operation as that is—you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.” Our knowing times, dear friends, are to come. We need not be so very anxious to know at present; this is the time of love. I would forego the filling of my head for a while if I could have my heart full; but, alas, we are generally so busy trying to attain merely head knowledge! My most intense longing is for a growing heart, a heart that truly loves the Savior. That is the way for the head to learn, for knowledge that comes by the way of the heart, and so enters the head, is the best of knowledge. Jesus said to Peter, “What I do, you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.”

8. *Peter said to Him, You shall never wash my feet.*

That is just like Peter; if John had not told us who it was that said this, we would have known that it was Peter. He was always in such a hurry, and he spoke so quickly, that he made many mistakes; yet he was always so honest and so true that his Master forgave his faults, and helped him to correct them.

8. *He answered him, If I wash you not, you have no part with Me.*

If Christ does not cleanse us, we do not belong to Him. If He does not, day by day, exercise a purifying influence over us, we are not His.

9. *Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*

How that pendulum swings to and fro! It went this way just now: “You shall never wash my feet.” Now it goes right away to the other extreme: “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” Go more gently, Peter, be more quiet. Why do you go so far in one direction, and then rush off so far in another way? Your Master knows better than you know what is right for you.

10. *Jesus said to him, He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all.*

Dear friends, when we believe in Christ, we are washed in the fountain filled with blood, and we are clean; but this world is such a sinful place that we cannot walk through it for even a day without some of its mire and dust clinging to us. Besides, God's lilies are so pure that they are hardly fit to bloom in such a defiling atmosphere. Oh, how we need that the dew should wash the lily when the night comes on! How greatly we need to have the foot-washing administered to us every day! We need not repeat the first great washing, the bath by which our sins were cleansed; when that was done, it was done once for all. Our sin was pardoned as before a Judge; but we want it to be taken away as before our Father, for we are now under His loving discipline.

Christ further said to His disciples, "You are clean, but not all." Does He say that to us at this time? "You are clean, but not all." Where sits the man, in this house of prayer, who is not clean, the sinner who has not yet been washed by Jesus Christ? Where sits the woman who is not clean? The Lord have mercy upon you, dear friends! You know that, in the olden days, they put a red cross on the door of the house where the plague was. We cannot put a cross upon you; but I pray you to consider yourselves as marked men and marked women in the sight of God, and I pray the Lord to take that mark away by causing you to be washed, that you may be clean every whit. How quickly He can wash the foulest sinners! He that believes in Jesus is washed in the precious blood, and he is clean. God cleanse us all for His great name's sake!

11-15. *For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, You are not all clean. So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.*

Christ's actions are the pattern for us to imitate! Oh, that we followed them more closely!

16. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.*

Sometimes we think that we are a deal too great to wash anybody's feet; we would like to see a person propose it to us, such big people as we are! If we talk like that, there is great need that we should be taken down. That would be the true way to rise in the likeness of Jesus. Oh, that we were lowlier in humility! We should be higher in grace if we were.

17. *If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.*

Peter wanted to know them; Jesus would have us do them.

18. *I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen;*

Christ has a chosen people, though some will not believe it. Yet it is so, for He says, "I know whom I have chosen."

18, 19. *But that the Scripture may be fulfilled, he that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it has come to pass, you may believe that I am He.*

"That I am." So, you see, even the great trouble of the early Church, the betrayal by Judas, was used by Christ for the strengthening of His disciples' faith. He foretold that it would be as it came to pass. So, dear friends, in these latter days, many forsake the gospel, but Jesus told us that it would be so. He taught His servants to write that there would be a falling away, and that in these last days there would be scoffers; and as we read the prophecies, and compare them with the fulfillment, even the doleful fact itself confirms our faith in our Lord.

God bless to us this brief reading of His own Word! Amen.

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