

Exposition of the Gospel of John CHAPTER 46

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE FOR US

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Transcript

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John 13:12-20

The following is given as an Analysis of the second section of John 13:

1. Christ's searching question, verse 12.
2. Christ's dignity and authority, verse 13.
3. Christ's example for us to follow, verses 14, 15.
4. Christ's warning against pride, verse 16.
5. Christ's approval of practical godliness, verse 17.
6. Christ's word about the Traitor, verses 18, 19.
7. Christ's encouragement to His servants, verse 20.

The opening portion of John 13 makes known the provision which Divine love has made for failure in our walk as we journey through this world-wilderness, and the means which are used to maintain us in fellowship with Christ. Its central design is stated by the Lord when He said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." The washing of our feet is imperative if we are to enjoy fellowship with the Holy One of God. "Grace" has given us a place in Christ, now "truth" operates to maintain our place with Christ. The effect of this ministry is stated in verse 10: "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."

There is a double washing for the believer: the one of his entire person, the other of his feet; the former is once for all, the latter needs repeating daily. In both instances the "washing" is by the Word. Of the former we read, "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom

of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:10, 11). And again, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). The "washing of regeneration" is not by blood, though it is inseparable from redemption by blood; and neither the one nor the other is ever repeated. Of the latter we read, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water By The Word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27). This same distinction was plainly marked in the Old Testament. When Aaron and his sons were consecrated, they were bathed all over (Ex. 29:4; Leviticus 8:6): but at the "laver" it was only their hands and feet which were daily cleansed (Ex. 30:19, 21).

In our last chapter we pointed out how that the "blood" is Godward, the "water" saintwards. The one is for legal expiation, the other for moral purification. Now, while both the "bathing" (Titus 3:5) and the "washing" of the saints' feet is by the "water of the word," there is a "cleansing" by blood—"the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). But this "cleansing" is judicial, not experiential. The precious blood has not been applied to my heart, but it has cancelled my guilt. It has washed out the heavy and black account which was once against me on high. A "book of remembrance" is written before God (Mal. 3:16), but in it there is not left on record a single sin against any believer. Just as a damp sponge passed over a slate removes every chalk mark upon it, so the blood of Christ has blotted out every transgression which once was marked up against me. How deeply significant, then, to read that when the Roman soldier pierced the side of the dead Savior that "forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34)! The blood for penal expiation, the water for moral purification. But mark the order: first, the "blood" to satisfy the demands of a holy God, then the "water" to meet the needs of His defiled people!

The distinction between the bathing of the entire body and the washing of the feet was aptly illustrated by the ancient custom of bathers. A person returning from the public baths, was, of course, dean, and needed not to be re-bathed. But wearing only sandals, which covered but part of the feet, he quickly needed the foot-bath to cleanse himself from the dust of travel encountered on his way from the baths to his home. Even to-day bathers in the sea are often seen going to their dressing-room with a pail of water to cleanse their soiled feet. This may be regarded as a parable of the spiritual life. Believers were bathed, completely cleansed, at the new birth. The "dressing-room" is Heaven, where we shall be robed in white raiment and garments of glory. But the pail of water is needed for our present use in connection with the daily walk.

In the second section of John 13 the Lord Jesus makes a practical application to the disciples of what He had just done for them. He intimates very plainly that, there was a spiritual meaning in His washing of their feet: Know ye not what I have done to you?" He tells them expressly that they ought to wash one another's feet. If they shrank from such lowly service, He reminds them that none other than He, their Master and Lord, had done so much for them. He warns them that a theoretical knowledge of these things was of no value, unless it resulted in an actual carrying out of them: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Then He recurs again to the fact that one of their number must be excepted. The presence of the traitor seems to have cast a shadow upon Him, but He tells them beforehand that the Scriptures had predicted his defection, so that when the betrayer delivered up their Master into the hands of His enemies the faith of the other disciples might not falter. Finally, He encourages them with the assurance that whosoever received His servants received Himself, yea, received the One who had sent Him. What dignity

that gave to their calling!

"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?" (John 13:12). It is important to note that it was from the "supper" that the Lord arose when He girded Himself for the washing of His disciples' feet; to it He now returns. Typically, it was Christ's "leaving the place of communion, as if this were interrupted, until His necessary work for them should renew it once more. He rises, therefore, from supper, and girded Himself for a fresh service. His sacrificial work is over, the shedding of blood is no more needed, but only the washing of water; and here also not the "bath of regeneration" (Titus 3:5 Gk.), but simply as He pointed out to Peter, the washing of the feet. It is defilement contracted in the walk that is in question; and He puts Himself at their feet to wash them. As of old, Jehovah could say to Israel, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins" (Isa. 43:24), so may He still say to us; but His unchanging love is equal to all possible demands upon it. Notice here that all the disciples need it, and that thus He invites us all to-day to put our feet into His hands continually, that they may be cleansed according to His thought of what is cleanness, who alone is capable of judging according to the perfect standard of the Sanctuary of which He is indeed Himself the Light" (Numerical Bible).

"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?" This is the sequel to what we read of in John 13:4. There He had lain aside His outer garments, here He resumes them. We believe that the former act had a double symbolical meaning. First, we are told, "he riseth from supper": what supper is not here specified. Now, "supping" speaks of communion, therefore when we are told "he riseth from supper and laid aside his garments and took a towel and girded himself," the first and deepest meaning would be, He left His place on high, where from all eternity He had been the Father's delight, and with whom He had enjoyed perfect communion as the Son, but now divested Himself of His outward glory and took upon Him the form of a servant. But the "supper" is also the memorial of His death, hence the rising from it and the laying aside of His garments would suggest the additional thought of His resurrection. Now, we believe that the Lord's action here in John 13:12 connects with and is the sequel to the first thing pointed out above. The putting on of His garments and the sitting down again would typify His return to the Father's presence, the resumption of His original glory (John 17:5), and His resting on high.

The Lord was about to explain (in part) and enforce what He had done unto the disciples. Before pondering what He had to say, let us first admire the calmness and deliberation which marked His actions. He quietly resumed His garments (there is no hint of the apostles offering to assist Him!) ere He seated Himself upon the couch or cushion, in His character of Teacher and Lord, thus giving His disciples time to recover from their surprise, collect their thoughts, and prepare themselves for what He was about to say. This gives additional meaning to His posture. Note that ere He began the "Sermon on the Mount" He first seated Himself (Matthew 5:1); so it was while seated in a ship (Matthew 13:2) He delivered the seven parables of the kingdom; so while He "sat upon the mount of Olives" (Matthew 24:3), He gave His longest prophetic announcement; so here He seated Himself before giving the great Paschal Discourse. The force of these notices is seen by comparing them with Luke 5:3: "He sat down and taught the people." Study the passages in John's Gospel where Jesus "stood," and then where He "walked"—see John 7:1 and our remarks.

"So after he had washed their feet," that is, the feet of each of the twelve. "We may learn an important lesson here as to dealing with offenders in the assembly. The Lord knew all about Judas, and all he was doing, but treated him as one of the apostles, till he displayed himself. There may be suspicion about

some individual, that all is not right with him; but mere suspicion will not suffice to act on. The matter must come clearly out, ere it can be rightly dealt with. Were this remembered, cases of discipline, instead of causing trouble in the assembly through lack of common judgment, would be clear to all unprejudiced persons, and the judgments of the assembly be accepted as correct. Has it not at times been the reverse?" (Mr. C. E. Stuart).

"He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?" Very searching was this. In washing the feet of His disciples He had not only displayed a marvellous humility, which He would have them take to heart, but He had eared for them in holy love. Not only had He saved them, but He was concerned about their fellowship with Himself, and for this, strict attention must be paid to the walk. For when the feet are soiled, the dust of this world must be removed. In His question the Lord illustrates how that it is His way to teach us afterwards the good which He has already done for us; as we grow up in Him in the truth, we are enabled to enter into and appreciate more deeply what at first we understood but slightly. The same grace which brought salvation teaches us, that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope" (Titus 2:11, 12). Deeply humbling is it to discover how little we understood the love and the grace which had been acting on our behalf.

"Know ye what I have done to you?" "This is a question which we should often put to ourselves respecting what our Lord says, and what He does to us. None of His works are the unfruitful works of darkness.™ They are all full of meaning. They are all intended to serve a purpose, and a good one;, and it is of importance, in most cases, that we should be aware of it. If we look at His work in the light of His Word, and seek the guidance of His good Spirit, we shall generally be able to discern His wise and benign purpose, even in dispensations at first sight very strange and mysterious. He only can explain His intentions, and He will not suffer His humble, enquiring disciples to remain ignorant of them, if it be for their real benefit to know them" (Dr. John Brown).

"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am" (John 13:13). Beautifully does this bring out the fact that the Lord Jesus is "full of grace and truth." Though He had just fulfilled for His disciples the most menial office of a slave, yet He had not abandoned the place of authority and supremacy. He reminds them that He is still their "Master and Lord," and that, by their own confession, for the word "call" here signifies address—"Ye address Me as Master and Lord." In thus owning the incarnate Son of God they "did well." Alas! that so many of His professing followers now treat Him with so much less respect than that which He here commended in the Twelve. Alas! that so many who owe their all for time and eternity to that peerless One who was "God manifest in flesh," speak of Him simply as "Jesus." Jesus is the Lord of glory, and surely it is due the dignity and majesty of His person that this should be recognized and owned, even in our very references to Him. We do not expect that those who despise and reject Him should speak of Him in any more exalting terms than "The Nazarene," or "Jesus"; but those who have been, by amazing grace, given "an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (1 John 5:20) ought gladly to confess Him as "The Lord Jesus Christ"!

"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." Surely this is sufficient for any humble-minded Christian. If our blessed Redeemer says we "say well" when we address Him as "Master and Lord," how can we afford to speak of Him in terms upon which His approval is not stamped? Never once do we find the apostles addressing Him as "Jesus" while He was with them on earth. When He exhorted them to make request of Him for an increase of laborers He bade them, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest" (Matthew 9:38). When He sent forth the disciples to secure the ass on which He was to ride into

Jerusalem, He ordered them to say, "The Lord hath need of him" (Luke 19:31). When He required the use of the upper room, it was "The Lord saith, My time is at hand; I will therefore keep the passover at thy house" (Matthew 26:18).

Above, we have said that the apostles never once addressed our Lord simply as "Jesus." Mark, now, how they did refer to the Blessed One. "And Peter answered him and said, LORD, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water" (Matthew 14:28). "And when his disciples James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" (Luke 9:54). "And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:22). "And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed" (Luke 24:33, 34). "Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest" (John 14:5). "That disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord" (John 21:7).

It may be objected that the Gospel narratives commonly refer to the Lord as "Jesus." It was Jesus who was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. It was Jesus who was moved with compassion as He beheld the sufferings and sorrows of humanity. It was Jesus who taught the people, etc. This is true, and the explanation is not far to seek. It was the Holy Spirit of God who, through the pens of the Evangelists, thus referred to Him, and this makes all the difference. What would be thought of one of the subjects of king George referring to the reigning monarch of Great Britian and saying, "I saw George pass through the city this morning"? If, then, it would be utterly incongruous for one of his subjects to speak thus of the king of England, how much more so is it to refer to the King of kings simply as Jesus! But now, king George's wife might refer to and speak of her husband as "George" with perfect propriety. Thus it is that the Holy Spirit refers to our Lord by His personal name in the Gospel narratives.

Our modern hymns are largely responsible for the dishonor that is now so generally cast upon that "worthy name" (James 2:7), and we cannot but raise our voice in indignant protest against much of the trash (for such it is) that masquerades under the name of "hymns" and religious "songs." It is sad and shocking to hear Christians sing "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus." There is no "lowly Jesus" to-day. The One who once passed through unparalleled humiliation has been "made both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), and is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. If the earnest student will turn to the four Gospels and note how different ones addressed the Son of God he will be well repaid. The enemies of Christ constantly referred to Him as Jesus (Matthew 26:71, etc.), and so did the demons (Mark 1:23, 24). Let us pray God to deliver us from this flippant, careless, and irreverent manner of speaking of His Blessed Son. Let us gladly own our Savior as "Lord" during the time of His rejection by the world. Let us remember His own words: "All should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:23). This is no trivial or trifling matter, for it stands written, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37).

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet" (verse 14). "Master" means teacher. The "teacher" is believed; the "Lord" is obeyed. Here Christ proceeded to enforce and apply what He had just done unto them. The connection is obvious, not only with what precedes, but also with that which follows. If the Greatest could minister to the least, how much more should the lesser minister to his equal! If the Superior waited upon His admitted inferiors, much less should that inferior wait upon his fellows. And mark the premise from which He draws this conclusion. He did not say, "I am your teacher and Lord," but "Ye call me teacher and Lord." It was from the confession of their own lips that He now proceeds to instruct

them. The order in which these titles occur is significant. First, these disciples had heard Christ as "teacher," and later they had come to know Him as their "Lord." But now Christ reverses the order: "If I then, your Lord and teacher." Why is this? Because this is the experimental order now. We must surrender to Him as "Lord," bowing to His authority, submitting to His yoke, before He will teach us!

"Ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). So they ought, and why had they not already done so? The supper-room here was already supplied with water, pail, and towel. Why had not they used them? Luke 22:24 tells us, "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." This occurred, be it noted, at this very time. It was then that the Savior shamed them by saying, "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as He that serveth" (Luke 22:27).

"Ye also ought to wash one another's feet." Let us consider the application of these words to ourselves: "In discovering any stain that may be resting on the feet of our brethren, we are not to blind ourselves to its presence, or to hide from ourselves its character by calling evil good. If we are to be honest and faithful in respect of ourselves, we shall be equally honest and truthful in respect of others. On the other hand, we have to beware of looking on the sins and failures of our brethren with Pharisaic complacency and cold indifference. What condition is more awful than that one who finds his joy in searching out iniquities, and exulting in exposing and magnifying them when discovered? Such, indeed, have reason to remember that with whatsoever judgment they judge, they shall be judged; and that the measure they mete out to others shall be meted out to themselves again. How continually should we remind ourselves that the love of the same gracious Lord that is toward us is toward our brethren likewise, and that one of our chief privileges is the title to appeal to it and intercede on their behalf, asking that sins, even of deepest dye, may be removed; and that the deserved results of chastisement and sorrow might be averted. So we should not be as those who "bite and devour one another," but be as those who "wash one another's feet" (Mr. B. W. Newton).

Yes, a most needful word is this for us all, ever ready as we are to lift up the skirts of a brother and say, "See how soiled his feet are"! But much exercise of soul, much judging of ourselves, is needed for such lowly work as this. I have to get down to my brother's feet if I am to wash them! That means that "the flesh" in me must be subdued. Let us not forget that searching word in Galatians 6:1, 2: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." I must be emptied of all sense of self-superiority before I can restore one who is "out of the way." It is the love of Christ which must constrain me as I seek to be of help to one of those for whom He died. It is as "dear children" (Eph. 5:1) that we are called upon to be "imitators of God"! Very wonderful and blessed is what is here before us: when the Lord appoints on earth a witness of His ways in Heaven, He tells us to wash one another's feet, and to love one another (John 13:34). There must be a patient forbearing with our brother's faults, a faithful but tender applying of the Word to his particular case, and an earnest and daily intercession for him: these are the main things included in this figure of "washing." But let us not stop short at the "washing": there must be the "drying," too! The service when done must be regarded as a service of the Fast. The failure which called for it, is now removed, and therefore is to be buried in the depths of oblivion. It ought never to be cast against the individual in the future.

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). It is well known that not a few have regarded this as a command from Christ for His followers now to practice literal foot-washing, yea, some have exalted it into a "Church ordinance." While we cannot but respect and

admire their desire to obey Christ, especially in a day when laxity and self-pleasing is so rife, yet we are fully satisfied that they have mistaken our Lord's meaning here. Surely to insist upon literal foot-washing from this verse is to miss the meaning as well as the spirit of the whole passage. It is not with literal water (any more than the "water" is literal in John 3:5; 4:14; 7:38) that the Lord would have us wash one another. It is the Word (of which "water" is the emblem) He would have us apply to our fellow-disciples' walk. This should not need arguing, but for the benefit of those who think that the Lord here instituted an ordinance which He would have practiced today, we would ask them to please weigh carefully the following points:

That that which the Lord Jesus here did to His disciples looked beyond the literal act to its deep symbolic significance is clear from these facts: First, the Lord's word to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now" (John 13:7): certainly Peter knew that his feet had been literally washed! Second, the further words of Christ to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John 13:8): certainly there are multitudes of believers that have a part with Christ who have never practiced foot-washing as a religious ordinance. Third, His words, "Ye are clean, but not all" (John 13:10): Judas could never have been thus excepted if only literal foot-washing was here in view. Fourth, His question, "Know ye what I have done to you?" clearly intimates that the Lord's act in washing the feet of the disciples had a profound spiritual meaning. Fifth, note that here in John 13:15 the Lord does not say "Ye should do what I have done unto you," but "as I have done to you!" Add to these considerations the fact that this incident is found in John's Gospel, which is, pre-eminently, the one which treats of spiritual relationships under various figures—bread, water, Shepherd and sheep, vine and the branches, etc., and surely all difficulty disappears.

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." We take it that the force of these words of Christ is this: I have just shown you how spiritual love operates: it ever seeks the good of its objects, and esteems no service too lowly to secure that good. It reminds us very much of the Lord's words following His matchless picture of the Good Samaritan who had compassion on the wounded traveler, dismounting, binding up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, setting him on His own beast, bringing him to the inn and taking care of him—"Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:33-37). When real love is in exercise it will perform with readiness difficult, despised, and even loathsome offices. There are some services which are even more menial and repulsive than the washing of feet, yet, on occasion, the service of love may call for them. It should hardly be necessary to add, that Christians living in Oriental lands, where sandals are worn, should be ready to wash literally the feet of a weary brother, not simply as an act of courtesy, but as a service of love.

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." We believe that one thing included in this comparative "as" is that it looks back to a detail in John 13:4 which is usually overlooked: it was as girded with a towel that Christ washed the feet of His disciples, and that which was signified by the "towel" applies to us. The "towel" was that with which Christ was girded: it bespoke the servant's attitude. Then the Lord used that with which He was girded upon their feet: emblematically, this was applying to them the humility which marked Him. Mr. Darby tells us that it was a linen towel which was employed, and in the New Testament "linen" signifies "the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:8, R.V.). It was His own spotless love which fitted Him to approach His disciples and apply the Word to them. How searching is all of this for us! If we would imitate Him in this labor of love we must ourselves be clothed with humility, we must employ nothing but the Word, and we must have on the linen towel of practical righteousness to dry with.

"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" (John 13:16). The Lord acts as His own interpreter. He here gives plain intimation of the meaning of His symbolic action. He draws an important lesson from what He had just done, the more needful because He was about to withdraw from them. It would fare ill with His people if their leaders were found disputing among themselves, devouring one another. Surrounded as they were by Judaism and Paganism, lambs in the midst of wolves, much depended upon their humility and mutual helpfulness. Much needed by every Christian, and especially by those engaged in Christian service, is that word of Christ's, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."

"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." That this is of more than ordinary importance is evidenced by the solemn and emphatic "Verily, verily" with which the Lord prefaced it. Moreover, the fact that at a later point in this same discourse the Lord said to His apostles, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord" (John 15:20), shows that it is one which is specially needed by his ambassadors. How many a dark page of "Church History" had never been written if the ministers of Christ had heeded this admonition! How vain the pretensions of those who have lorded it over God's heritage in the light of this searching word! Sad indeed have been the manifestations of Nicolaitanism in every age. Even before the last of the apostles left this world he had to say, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not" (3 John 9); and the same spirit is far from being dead today.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). If ye know what "things"? First, the vital need of placing our feet in the hands of Christ for cleansing (John 13:8). Second, the owning of Christ as "Master and Lord" (John 13:13). Third, the need of washing one another's feet (John 13:14). Fourth, the performing of this ministry as Christ performed it "in lowly love" (John 13:15). Now, said our Savior, If ye know "these things," happy or blessed are ye if ye do them. A mere speculative knowledge of such things is of no value. An intellectual apprehension, without the embodiment of them in our daily lives, is worse than useless. It is both significant and solemn to note that the one Christ termed a wise man that built his house upon the rock is, "Whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them" (Matthew 7:24). No one knows more truth than the Devil, and yet none works more evil!

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." "It has been well remarked that our Lord does not say, "Happy are ye if these things be done to you," but "Happy are ye if ye do them." We are apt to suppose that we should be happy if men loved us, and were ready on every occasion to serve us. But, in the judgment of Christ, it would more conduce to our happiness that our hearts were like His, full of love to all our brethren, and our hands like His, ever ready to perform to them even the humblest offices of kindness. We often make ourselves unhappy by thinking that we are not treated with the deference and kindness to which we consider ourselves entitled. If we would be really happy, we must think more of others and less of ourselves. True happiness dwells within; and one of its leading elements is the disinterested self-sacrificing love which made the bosom of Jesus its constant dwelling-place" (Dr. John Brown).

"I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen" (John 13:18). The immediate reference is to what the Lord had said in the previous verse. Just as in John 13:10 He had said to the twelve, "Ye are dean," and then added, "but not all," so after saying, "Happy are ye if ye do them," He at once says, "I speak not of you all." Faithfulness required Him to make an exception. There was no happiness for Judas; before him lay "the blackness of darkness for ever." When Christ said, "I know whom I have chosen" it is evident that

He was not speaking of election to salvation, but to the apostolate. Where eternal election is in view the Scriptures uniformly ascribe it to God the Father. But where it is a question of ministry or service, in the New Testament, the choice and the call usually proceed from the Lord Jesus—see Matthew 9:30; Matthew 20:1; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:24; Acts 26:16; Ephesians 4:11, etc. His words here in John 13:18 are parallel with those in John 6:70: "Have not I chosen you twelve? and one of you is a devil?"

"But that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me" (John 13:18). As to why the Lord Jesus chose Judas to be one of the twelve, see our remarks on John 6:70, 71. Very remarkable is this statement here in the light of the context. Christ had washed the feet of the very one whose heel was raised against Himself! Into what depths of humiliation did the Son of God deign to descend! He now foretells the defection of Judas, and announces that this was but the fulfillment of the prophetic Word. The reference is to the 41st Psalm, which exposes the awful character of the betrayer; the 109th Psalm makes known the outcome of his treachery. Christ then had suffered the traitor to remain with Him that the Scriptures might be fulfilled; but as soon as the "sop" had been given to Him, Christ would say, "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27). "How wondrous the patience which, knowing all from the beginning, bore all to the end, without a frown or sign of shrinking from the traitor! But so much the more withering must be the sentence of judgment when it comes from His lips, the Lord of glory, the hated and despised of men" (Mr. W. Kelly).

"He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me." The local reference in Psalm 41 is to what David suffered at the hands of Ahithophel, but that was but a foreshadowing and type of what the Savior suffered from Judas. In now quoting from this prophetic Psalm the Lord Jesus evidenced His Divine knowledge of what lay before Him, and testified to the inestimable value of the Scriptures. Nothing proves more conclusively their Divine origin than the accurate and literal fulfillment of their prophecies. Predictions were made of events which were not to transpire till hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of years afterwards, minute details are furnished, and the specific accomplishment of them can only be accounted for on the one ground that He who knows the end from the beginning was their Author.

The wording of this prophecy about Judas is very striking. "His heel! the most contemptible rejection possible: was it not such to sell the Lord of glory for the price of a slave? It was as if he would inflict upon Christ the Serpent's predicted wound (Gen. 3:15)? (F. W. Grant.)

"Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am" (John 13:19). What care did He evince for His own! What blessed proof was this of His loving them "unto the end"! Christ would here assure the disciples that everything which befell Him, even that which was most staggering to faith, was but the strict fulfillment of what had long ago been recorded. He was the great One typified and prophesied throughout the Old Testament, and He now assures the apostles of Judas's perfidy before he went forth to bargain with the priests, that they might know He had not trusted in him, nor had He been deceived by him, as had David by Ahithophel! Thus, instead of the apostles being stumbled by the apostasy of one of their number, it should strengthen their faith in every written word of God to know that that very Word had long before announced what they were on the eve of witnessing. Moreover, their faith in Christ should be strengthened, too. By calling their attention to the fulfillment of Psalm 41 He showed them that He was the Person there marked out; that He was a true Prophet, announcing the certain accomplishment of David's prediction before it came to pass; and that He was the great "I am" who "searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men," being fully acquainted with their secret thoughts and most carefully concealed designs.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20). At first sight there appears to be no connection between this verse and the ones preceding, yet a little thought will soon discover the link between them. The Lord had been exhorting His disciples to follow the example which He had given, assuring them they would be happy if they did so. Then He announced the apostasy of Judas. Now He informs them that their vocation was by no means affected by the defection of the betrayer. "The whole circle of the apostles seemed to be disorganized by the treachery of Judas; and therefore the Lord confirms the faithful in their election, and that very fittingly by a repetition of that earlier promise (Matthew 10:42) on which all depended" (Stier). It was the Lord comforting His own and most graciously establishing their hearts by turning their attention away from the traitor to their Master, who abides forever the same, as does the Father.

Judas had been one of the twelve whom the Lord had sent forth to preach the Gospel and to work miraculous signs in His name (Matthew 10). Would then all that he had done as an apostle be discredited, when his real character became known? This important question here receives answer from our Lord: "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me." The Lord knew how apt His people are to despise the work done if the worker proves to be unworthy; therefore does He teach us to look beyond the instrument to the One who sent him. The Lord has the right to appoint whom He pleases. If, then, the message is from God's Word, reject it not because the messenger proves a fraud. What matters it to me whether the postman be black or white, pleasant or unpleasant, so long as he hands me the right letter?

"He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." There is another important principle here. The apostles were the ambassadors of the Lord, and in the person of an ambassador the sovereign himself is received or set at naught. As His ambassadors, how circumspectly ought each of His servants to walk! And as His ambassadors, how dutiful and respectful in its reception should the Church be of them! As He was sent from the Father, so they were sent from Him. By this gracious analogy He arms them with authority and inspires them with courage. Thus the Lord fully identifies them with Himself.

The following questions need studying to prepare for our next lesson:

1. What three things are dearly implied in verse 22?
2. Why did not Peter ask the Lord directly, verse 24?
3. Why did Jesus say to Judas, verse 27?
4. In how many respects was the Son of man glorified at the Cross, verse 31?
5. What attributes of God were glorified at the Cross, verse 31?
6. In what sense was it a "new commandment," verse 34?
7. What is the meaning of verse 36?

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