
John 13:1-11

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

This passage starts what is mostly a monologue that does not end until Jesus goes to the garden and is betrayed by Judas. So we are truly at the last hour of Jesus' life. As we begin studying *chapters 13-17* I want you to understand that these are Jesus last words to His disciples (His small group) while He is here on earth. As such, we should pay close attention to not only what He says but most importantly why He says it. There is so much to understand from the "why." It is

in the “why” that we gain an understanding of the heart of God which, by the way, is the filter through which we are to always view the commands of God.

Also, please understand that everything is planned; nothing that is going to happen to Jesus is random. He knows His hour has arrived because He planned for not only the specific time but also all of the players in this final drama. He knew who would betray Him and even who would deny Him. He knew that Judas was going to be the instrument through which His betrayal would occur; in fact, He always knew that it was going to be Judas for He knew those who were His own and those who were not.

John tells us that Jesus, having loved His own who were in the world, loved them to the end. From the beginning to the end Jesus loved those who belonged to Him and that is the point of the whole story in *Chapter 13*—this is John’s thesis statement. The rest is really just a practical demonstration which supports John’s thesis. But before we jump into the demonstration of His love, I would like us to understand a little bit about Jesus’ love. John makes the point that Jesus has everything: “the Father had given all things into His hands.” The verb construct of “had given” is in the aorist tense which means that not only from our perspective has it been done (past tense) it also sums up the totality of what has been, what is, and what will always be from the beginning to the end. Everything is His!

Therefore, Jesus literally wants for nothing. In fact, the entire Godhead is, in and of itself, absolutely complete. *Job 22:2* and *35:6-8* tells us that by our actions and choices we can neither add anything to God nor take anything away from Him. In addition, He needs nothing from us. In terms of holding to an accurate Biblical worldview, this is such a critical truth. As such, Jesus loves us because He can and because He does. But what is so beautiful to me is the nature of His love. Because He is complete, because He is whole, He is free to love us and His love is

absolutely pure. In other words, there is no selfishness in His love. There is no need that He is trying to satisfy which taints His affection and He does not need us to fill any hole or gap in His emotions or psyche. His love is completely gratuitous and flows from His fullness, His excess, and His abundance.

This kind of love is not something we can really comprehend it is only something we can experience. In fact, this is the reason that the Greeks had to adopt an entirely new word to describe the love that comes from God verses the love that originates from man. This “Agape,” as they called it, is a type of love about which they knew nothing about and had never previously experienced. The gods of the Greek pantheon did not love and any fabricated connection they had with man was not only capricious but seemed to be always bent toward the malicious.

Understanding Jesus’ love is so important because it has as much to do with the reasons we can trust the character and nature of God as it has to do with our lives, as believers. And with that in mind it should not be too difficult to see the obvious contrast between Jesus’ love and the way we love. Our love comes from need—great need; thus, our relationships are always corrupted with selfishness and are often rooted in insecurity, fear, obsession, and a constant taking. This makes it very difficult for anyone to sustain a successful and healthy relationship. The odds are always stacked against us and it seems we are our own worst enemy when it comes to having healthy relationships.

There are those who have worked their way through a lot of the relational hang-ups and seem to get along fairly well, but they are few and far between. Most peoples’ relationships, marriages, and families are wrought with strife, conflict, frustration, exasperation, and, if they stay together, resignation that this must just be how life is to be lived. And don’t be deceived this goes for those who consider

themselves Christians and non-Christians alike. The data does not reveal much of a difference between the two groups.

Therefore, what is amazing about Jesus' love is that not only does He lavish it upon us, but He gives us an opportunity to have a completely different experience in all our interpersonal relationships. Jesus desires to see His love fill us so completely that we are full and satisfied; thus, like Him, we will be free to love others in the same way that He loves us—unselfish and gratuitous. Free to let His love overflow from our lives to the lives of others in a beautiful display of the purity of Godly desire; the desire to see others filled in the same way you have been filled.

Now, what I am going to say next might get a little confusing, but I will try and keep things simple and clear. You are not able to fully experience this “Agape” love and express it to others unless you let God have dominance in your life—unless He becomes your absolute *priority* and the ultimate *authority* over your life such that He rules and is Lord of your life. This means you have to get out of the way.

I am going to use a couple of diagrams to help communicate this concept for those who may not be familiar. [Chart 1] Prior to receiving Jesus into your life, you are ruled and dominated by your old sinful nature. [Chart 2] However, if you have been born again of the Spirit of God, He has given you a new nature—His nature (which the Bible calls the *New Creation*). This nature does not replace your old sinful nature; rather, it is infused into your being and is now in conflict with your old sinful nature. [Chart 3] But if you so choose, your old sinful nature will always be overpowered and dominated by the New Creation, but it is something you have to choose. You have to choose to *bet your life* on the truth revealed to you in the Word of God. You have to be absolutely dependent upon God and His wisdom for

your life. You have to relinquish all control of who you are and what you hope to be to Him. And, if you do, God's Agape love will fill you and govern your interactions with others and you will be able to love with God's selfless and gratuitous love. His love will be your love and it will overflow from your life and be experienced by all those you connect with. This is the missing magic that we have all sought. This is the secret to experiencing amazing relationships.

As if that is not amazing enough, we actually have the same motivation, if that is the right word, or the same reasons as Jesus to love the way that He loves. The Bible tells us that when we become children of God we become joint heirs with Jesus Christ (*Romans 8:17*). This means that we have equal rights to everything that the Father has granted to Jesus. If it is His it is ours. This is unbelievable! This is more than phenomenal! And please understand this is not only our destiny but this is our current reality.

Now, it's given that this is something that we are not physically experiencing right now at this moment (even though it is a spiritual truth), but neither was Jesus while He was in His human body sitting there having dinner with His friends literally hours before He would be arrested, beaten, and killed. But we are told that "He knew the Father had given Him all things" and that was enough for Him to give all of Himself and Agape those who were His.

In the same way, the knowledge that 1) we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, recipients of all that the Father has given to the Son, 2) He is our Good Shepherd and the Gate Keeper regulating all that He allows in our lives, and 3) that He is our "I AM"—everything we could ever need (demonstrated by the fact that He has forgiven our sins and given us His Holy Spirit to live within our beings), should be enough for us to trust ourselves to Him, *bet our lives* on His truth, and give Him absolute control over our lives so He can be entirely free to live through us. This is

the essence of true faith and it is this kind of faith that will naturally produce Agape love.

I know this is hard to fathom. In our old sinful nature, we are so fearful, we are so intimidated, insecure and needy that it is hard to even imagine dealing with others from a love that is not rooted in what we can get, what we can take, and what we think we deserve. But dealing with each other on the basis of God's Agape love is the ultimate expression of our relationship with God while we are here on this earth. Our ability to express Agape towards our brothers and sisters in Christ is to be the miracle that convinces others that Jesus is real. This kind of love is not to be a fantasy, it is not to be a hopeful wish, it is not to be for the story books, but it is to be our day-in-and-day-out reality. As believers we are to experience friendships, marriages, and family relationships that are powerful and unique and which stand in stark contrast to the relationships of those who do not know Jesus.

Let's think about the reasons why so many believers do not experience or express this kind of love with the frequency that we should expect. I believe it is because we attempt to fill our emptiness, our neediness, and the yearning within our heart through relationships with other fallible and weak human beings. We give ourselves to them expecting that they will make us whole and complete. But it is only wishful thinking. No one will ever be able to satisfy the ache and yearning in your heart. No person will ever be enough for you. Everyone will fail you at some point in time. As a result, you will try harder and harder to take what you think you need and thereby repeat the cycle of pain and damage found in most relationships.

The truth is that we can only ever truly be filled and satisfied in Jesus. He is the only one who can bring us what we really need. That is why He says that He is our

“I AM,” our Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end! And this is why seeking to be in relationship with Jesus needs to be our aim. I know that people are tangible and the ability to talk to someone, touch someone, and be with someone is so powerful and, at least temporarily, satisfying to our flesh; yet, our hearts always scream for more. It screams to be filled by the Spirit of God for that is how He made us. But we normally don’t understand the craving within our souls and so we look to someone else, someone new (or something else), to see if maybe this time we can find the love or satisfaction for which we have been searching. But it is never enough—never has been and never will be!

Therefore, it is vital for us to believe that 1) being filled with God’s Agape love is His will for our lives, 2) experiencing this love will be a natural result of the New Creation dominating our lives, 3) both the filling and expressing of this love to others is the by-product of true Biblical faith, and 4) it is entirely possible for us to have deep, intimate, safe, and selfless dynamic relationships with other believers where we are free to give, free to serve, and free to lavish His love on their lives. Besides, I can assure you of something that has become very true in my life and that is that when you learn to live from your *New Creation*, you will become amazed at how tangible, how real, the intangible God really can be.

To summarize: Jesus has given us the ability to love; He has given us the reason to love; He has given us the command to love; but we still must choose. Now don’t be confused; we cannot on our own choose to love but we can choose to live by faith so that He will have access to our lives to love through us. I want you to write this next statement down: the presence of His Agape love in our lives is directly proportional to the areas of our lives which we have surrendered to Him. Therefore, to the extent that you seem to have little access to this type of gratuitous love, I would suggest that there are still too many areas in your life where you trust

yourself and your wisdom for your life and not God. This is something that has to be remedied.

Let's move on to this next part of the story where we get a firsthand example of what Agape actually looks like in action. Jesus, their master, teacher, rabbi, and their Messiah takes off His outer garment and stoops down and literally goes around the table and washes the disciples' feet. In our culture this is hard to connect with, but in the 1st century way of life, this was an unbelievable act and the disciples did not understand what He was doing or why He was doing it. A person's feet were so filthy and gross that this was something that not even a Jewish slave would do for their master; rather, it was relegated to gentile slaves. Now, maybe a gracious host or hostess might order someone in the household who has the lowest status to wash the feet of a very special guest to show honor and deference, but even then it was not a customary practice. It was considered demeaning and even shameful. But Jesus just gets up, girds Himself, stoops down, and goes around the room and washes everyone's feet. You have to understand that this was absolutely mind-blowing.

What was Jesus communicating? He is saying that He experiences no shame, no embarrassment and is in no way debased by choosing to do this filthy menial task. In fact, He is absolutely free to lavish this kind of care and attention on those He loves because He is simply spilling over the love of the Father onto them. He is unhindered in His expression of love and He is willing to do even the lowest and grossest task because He has nothing to lose and everything to give. His mind and His heart do not process things in the same way that we do in our old sinful nature. He does not need to worry about acting powerful and strong because He is powerful and strong; and, therefore, by definition all that He does reflects His power and strength. He does not need to worry about positioning for status, honor,

and prestige because He is already at the top of the heap and as *Psalm 111:3* says: “Everything He does reveals His glory and majesty.” And, since everything belongs to Him already, He has nothing to prove, nothing to protect, and since He is God and no one can take anything out of His hands, He has nothing to defend. I would like to sum this up very simply: He is therefore He can!

Let’s move forward in our text because this really brings out this point, and then we will back track to the discussion between Him and Peter.

John 13:12-17, 20

So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them... [20] "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

Too many people when they read this passage stop at the command “do as I did to you” and process it as merely a command for us to obey. In so doing, they never really capture the reason or the motivation as to why we can be free to do as Jesus has done. Please do not miss this point; the essence of this passage is not about “obedience” but about living as He lived in complete dependence upon the Father. All of religious history reveals beyond a shadow of a doubt that anytime we try and

“obey” God we fail. In fact, failure is the predictable and dependable fruit of our self-effort to please God.

Again, please understand that the essence of this passage is not about our traditional notions of “obedience,” but it is about the ability to live as He lived because of the relationship we have with the Father and the Son. As the Father’s love filled the Son and overflowed to those He loved, Jesus’ love for us will fill us and both the love of the Father and the love of the Son will pour out from our lives to others without regard for position, status, prestige, or honor. That is why if someone rejects us they will be rejecting both the Father and the Son and likewise if someone welcomes us they are also welcoming the Father and the Son.

This is such a powerful truth and aside from freaking you out, should frame for you the whole idea of true Biblical obedience. In *John 15:5* Jesus says: “without me you can do nothing.” This statement is an absolute with no room for negotiation. In other words, the only way we can be “obedient” to the Lord is when He is the one who gives us the desire, the ability, and even does the work of obedience through us. Let me rephrase this concept another way. Our job is to live by faith: to actively believe the truth about God—to literally bet our lives on that truth. His response will be to dominate our bodies (through the New Creation) and do the will of the Father in heaven here on earth in and through our lives. He will be our obedience. Therefore, “if you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” In fact, there can be no greater blessing I know than to have Jesus live His life through me; what a privilege.

And, just so you know, Jesus is not talking in this passage about the need for us to literally wash each others’ feet; He is talking about a love that will do anything, anywhere, anytime, for any believer just because we can and just because that is what He loves to do.

John 13:18-19

"I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.' "From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He.

Now clearly, this instruction—this way of life—is only for believers. Jesus is making a powerful point here that was lost on the disciples until later when they realized what Judas actually did. Jesus quotes from *Psalms 41:9* which says: “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.” Judas was a confidant, one of the exclusive 12 disciples, and Jesus, along with the rest of the disciples, considered Him to be a friend. Yet, He was the betrayer and this is something that Jesus knew all along. Nevertheless, Jesus still washed His feet. This is amazing.

We have seen God’s Agape love freely flow to those who were His own, but in His love for Judas we also see a beautiful picture of how God’s Agape love also flows to all of humanity—even those who utterly reject Him. And why does God love this way? He loves because He can, because He is filled with love, and because He loves to love. Again, this highlights how Agape love is selfless for it does not need a response and does not seek reciprocation from others for its own sake, but is freely given.

This has been something that has confused the so called righteous throughout all time. The godly have always had the notion that if you are good and if you belong to God then you will be blessed and if you are evil and self seeking that God will

curse you. Well that is simply not the case (at least not here on earth; that is a truth to be experienced in the after-life). The rain falls on both the righteous and the ungodly alike. It may offend our religious sensibilities of justice, but God gratuitously blesses unbelievers—even those whom He knows will never come to Him. This is simply incredible and just proves that His love is boundless and limitless. It is perfect!

Let's back up now to that discussion He had with Peter.

John 13:6-11

So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

Ok, I know this is kind of weird, but understanding this metaphor is not as difficult as it may seem at first. Because all of the disciples, except for Judas, believed that Jesus was the Christ, like their father Abraham they were justified by their faith—they were spiritually clean and set apart for the Father. Thus, they did not need to have their whole body bathed, they were already clean.

So what is with the feet? The feet are symbolic of the fact that even though we have been born again and have new life in Jesus Christ, we still trudge through this

sinful world. And even in our daily existence we get slimed just by the fact that we are alive. It does not matter if we are working, going to school, involved in the ministry, or doing nothing at all, we live in a world that has been corrupted through and through by sin and the filth of the world's system dirties our souls.

If you think about it we are constantly inundated with the wisdom and values of this world which stand in opposition to the wisdom and values of God. We just have to turn on the TV, watch a movie, read a news paper, go to work, read our text books, listen to a lecture, sit in a coffee shop and listen to the conversations around us, or just have a conversation with an unbeliever or a believer who is operating from their old sinful nature, and you will get your feet dirty. It is just the way it is; so that is why we need our feet washed.

This washing is symbolic of being cleansed by the Word of God. We find this metaphor in *Ephesians 5:26* where it talks about being washed with the water of the Word. This washing of the feet was a clever metaphor whereby Jesus exhorts us to regularly be in the Word so that our souls can be cleansed of the filth of the world. Otherwise we will end up with gross, filthy, and stinky feet; not very becoming for one who is otherwise clean.

As for me, this is actually quite practical. I can only do certain things for so long, especially listening to music, indulging myself in movies, following politics, and so on before my Spirit feels not just impacted but inflicted and I know that I need to just stop, get in the Word, and just let it wash over me and cleanse me. And when I do it is amazing how tangible this washing is to my soul. Many of you know exactly what I am talking about. As a believer, it is so important that you become aware of this dynamic and let Jesus regularly cleanse you with the Word of truth.

As we close I want to help you understand something that might be a bit confusing and which in times of weakness, if you do not understand this passage, might be an errant cause for worry—especially if you have not been reading your Bible. Jesus told Peter: "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." In context of the entire passage, however, it does not seem like Jesus is really giving an answer to Peter's objection to let Jesus wash his feet as much as He is making a point contrasting Judas with the other disciples. I say this because of His comment: "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." Peter is clean; Peter has exercised saving faith and therefore Peter has nothing to fear. Jesus stated this emphatically as the verb tense is in the present active indicative. It is a statement of fact. However, Judas has not been washed at all. He has not exercised saving faith. Therefore, even the washing of his feet is really to no avail and it has no true spiritual impact in his life.

This is quite interesting because except for the inside information we are given regarding Judas, he looks just like all the other disciples. He even has a position of authority and trust being the treasurer of the group. But he has been along for this long and tumultuous ride and has never truly believed. This is the way of the church. There are always those in the midst of practically every fellowship who look like Christians, call themselves Christians, and do Christian things, even participate in leadership, but they have no part alongside Jesus because they have never been washed clean. Whatever you do, don't let that be you. You can choose anytime you want to place your faith in the person of Jesus Christ and trust yourself completely to Him. It is the only way to experience and to ultimately express the amazing perfect and satisfying Agape love that He has for you.

Let's Pray

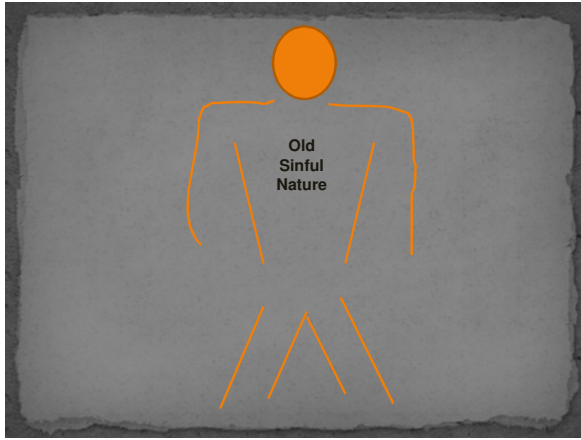


Chart 1

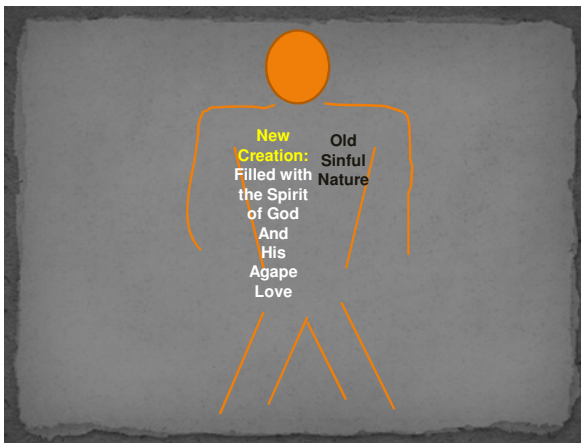


Chart 2

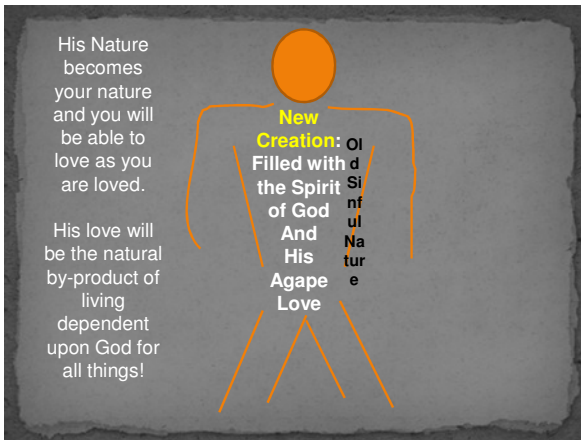


Chart 3