

John (Part 20)

John 12:24-John 13:1-17 The Essence of Love is Sacrifice

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We will begin in John 12:24. This is such an important principle. I began to string together a few scriptures that I thought might be interesting to pursue for a little while. I cannot say that I have done a great deal of thinking about it, but I think that the principle that is given here is essential for our growth. I have mentioned several different times that this same thing is repeated six different times in the Gospels. It is something that I have never thought of before, but it appears at least a seventh time, but in I Corinthians.

John 12:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

That is pretty self-evident. Anyone who has planted anything in this life recognizes the principle that is involved here. I do not care what kind of seed it is that you plant. Almost everybody has planted a seed at one time or another, be a tomato seed or whatever. I do not know of any plant where you plant one seed and you only get one piece of fruit. Rather, it seems that from each seed that is planted and germinates, it produces a plant which indeed produces a great deal more fruit.

That is the principle that Jesus is talking about here, in regard to His death. He of course is the seed, and unless He dies and is planted in the earth, there is not going to be any more fruit. The fruit is you and me. The fruits are others who have preceded us in this Christian way of life, and who are born into the family of God.

What we have to understand is that the same principle is still at work today. As it works with seed, it worked with Christ, and it also works with us. If we plant seed, the chances are extremely great that it is going to produce more fruit. In the practical sense, this has to be put to work in any area where there is the opportunity to sacrifice. If we will sacrifice ourselves, if we will plant ourselves, then it is likely that good fruit is going to be produced.

On the other hand, if we plant bad seed, then bad fruit is going to be produced. It works either way. As it says in Galatians 6:7, "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

There is the principle that more will be produced than is sown, for good or for bad. So

this principle that Jesus is talking about produces in both directions, for both good or bad. We have to make it our choice to consciously plant good seed, so that good fruit is produced.

In Matthew 7, we will look at a scripture that applies in the same sense:

Matthew 7:17-18 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

That ought to be reassuring. So many times, we are discouraged because we feel that have sacrificed ourselves, we feel that we have planted good seed, and we do not see any result. We do not see any fruit produced. Now there is the reassurance that if we plant good seed, it is going to bear good fruit. The only question that remains is, when? Are you willing to wait for the second resurrection?

The issue here in the United States especially, and the Western world in general, is we expect things to occur immediately. We live for the moment, and we feel that if something is not produced immediately, then apparently it is not going to be produced at all, and we become bored very quickly. We have to learn to live trusting God, and knowing that good fruit is indeed going to be produced if we plant good seed.

Let us go to I Corinthians 15 and draw this out a little further. This is the resurrection chapter. Before a body can rise in the resurrection, it has to be planted. The body in the analogy is the seed.

I Corinthians 15:35-36 But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one [actually in the Greek that is much more emphatic, Paul says "You fools!"]], what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.

He is following the same principle, the same analogy that Jesus did (let us say the apostle John did) in John 12:24, and six times in the New Testament. If we are going to produce good fruit, there has to be a seed sown. When you sow a seed, you sacrifice, you are giving something up. Even as when a seed is planted, it gives up its life in order for a plant to be produced. Then from the plant (from the seed) comes more fruit.

That is the analogy. What makes it work? That is the question that has to be addressed

by us. What makes it work?

In the case of a seed, a real literal seed—a tomato seed, a walnut seed, or anything—we can say the laws of God make it work. The laws that God created cause the bacteria and whatever else is in the ground to eat away at the seed, begin to break it down, and the various chemicals and minerals cause that seed to spring forth. But the seed gives up its life.

Paul is going to explain what makes it work for you and me, because we are not really a seed in the literal sense. When we are planted in the ground, we are dead.

I Corinthians 15:35-38 But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

The seed, the literal seed, is sown, and in the process of germination, it is destroyed. It is sacrificed, and a new form of life appears—the plant.

We are sown a physical body, and we are raised a spiritual body. We did not grow from physical to spiritual by natural processes. But it tells you in verses 36 and 38 what the answer is. What you sow is not made alive, or not quickened as the King James says, “But God gives it a body.” A new life appears. It is made alive; God gives it life.

The important thing for you and me is that God is involved in this spiritual, sacrificial process. This has very important ramifications to John 12:24 and the other five times that Jesus said this. “He that tries to save his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake shall save it,” Jesus said. He will be made alive.

Is that going to come about because of natural processes? No, it will not. God is involved in it.

Let us make this even more practical, because the resurrection is a ways off yet. What about in marriage, and the spiritual sacrificial process? What about in your work with your employer, and this spiritual, sacrificial process? And what about your relationships with fellow employees, and what about relationships with your neighbor, and with retailers with whom you deal? What about those kind of relationships, and this process of killing yourself, sacrificing yourself, giving yourself in service?

Can we really be confident that it is going to work, that it is going to produce good fruit? Can we really be confident that if we sow good seed, that good fruit is going to come from it? What makes that process work? Does it happen by natural processes, as it does with the wheat seed?

I Peter 2:13-15 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

He is talking about submitting. By nature, carnally, you do not like to submit. Romans 8:7 says that the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject—it will not submit—to God, to God's law. Not willingly. We carry that same process through to other governmental agencies as well. You know you have an awfully hard time going 55 miles per hour. That car just seems to creep up, 56, 57, 58, 60. You are going right along with everybody else, and first thing you know, you are going 63, 65, and there is a big truck behind you, and you got to get out of the way!

There was recently a poll released that showed how frequently people cheat on the government on their income tax. Apparently, this poll showed that the prevailing attitude of the American was that you get away with what you can. The government is fair game, for lying, stealing. That is the normal human approach.

This says, "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." That is God's order. Can we really sacrifice ourselves to pay Uncle Sam all the taxes that are his due? Or to adhere to the speed limit? Or any other ordinance of man, to submit ourselves to it?

I Peter 2:18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.

That is awfully difficult to do, because humanly, we only want to work for those who are good—good to us—and we want to get out of as much work as we possibly can. Rather than submitting, rather than subjecting ourselves, rather than sacrificing ourselves and really giving our all—you can answer the rest of the question. You are human, even as I am.

I Peter 2:20-21 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called...

That is, to be submissive. To sacrifice that carnality that human nature wants to do. To allow yourself to be planted, in order that good fruit can be produced, takes a lot of faith, because there is going to be pain involved in the sacrificing of human nature.

I Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.

Look at verses 22 and 23, because here comes the answer as to what makes this process work, and connect this with I Corinthians 15:36 and 38:

I Peter 2:22-23 Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth [He did not try to deceitfully work His way around either by manipulating language or twisting the word of God in any way]; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself [or submitted Himself] to Him who judges righteously.

Submission, or sacrificing, to the will of God in the face of whatever the circumstance might be, is an act of faith in God. It is God, we find, in I Corinthians 15, who makes this process work.

It is not like the laws of God in regard to natural processes. If you plant a seed, all of the bacteria and other things that are working in the ground bring about the destruction of that seed by nature, in order that a new plant can be produced and fruit will be produced. But when you are dealing with human relationships, it is not a natural process. God is involved in His creation. He is involved in your life, and it is He that produces the good fruit, because we have submitted.

What I am talking about, I feel, is not a natural process. It is a spiritual process in which God is involved, and He ensures that it works, because of your faith in Him. That is the only thing that makes us do this. We sacrifice ourselves, we deny ourselves, we submit even though we do not want to submit, only because we believe in God. We believe His Word, and we believe that He is actively working in our lives. That is what makes the resurrection work. It is not a natural process.

The natural process would be the destruction of our body, but there would be no resurrection. There would be no new life occur, unless God gave it.

And so it is, in this submitting our wills to the will of God, and sacrificing ourselves. Do you see what Christ did? He committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. That is the answer. Submission, where God commands it, works only because of God.

Let us extend this out even further.

Galatians 2:19-20 For I through the law died [the wages of sin is death, and the law has a claim on our life because of sin] to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ [Have you been crucified with Christ, have you sacrificed your life to Him?]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

It is an interesting concept to begin to extrapolate on.

II Corinthians 5:14-15 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Now were you crucified with Christ, did you die, were you buried in the waters of baptism and come up out of the waters of baptism to a new life, in order that you might live your life for Him? Very interesting process. Paul even uses those words, or similar words, in Romans 6, that we are planted in His likeness, like a seed.

What God wants us to do is to be a living sacrifice, to understand this process, in its natural sense, and extrapolate on it in our life. He wants us to put it to practice in practical situations, and understand that even as the natural process works with seeds, that it will also work in spiritual areas, because He lives, and He will make it work.

The hard part for us is to not only catch the concept, but to have enough faith that it will work. That is why Paul said, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loves me and gave Himself for me." Living by faith—it was not his own faith, it was the faith of God that was in him.

II Corinthians 5:16-17 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

How about that! The old seed goes in the ground, and something entirely different comes out of the ground. That is what happens in the natural processes. Paul is making an analogy of this—that we too have died to sin, we have been planted in the waters of baptism, and we come up out of the waters a new creation.

The old man was planted, a new man comes up. But the new man's life is no longer dedicated to self-satisfaction, the new man's life is now dedicated to submitting to God. The sacrifice continues.

II Corinthians 5:17-18 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

Romans 6:1-4 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

There it is again. The death, planting, resurrection process. New fruit is born.

Romans 6:5-7 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.

What a powerful statement. Only those who sacrifice themselves have been freed from sin. Only those who have died. That is how sin is overcome. God knows you have

gotten the picture of what it is that produces fruit, of what it is that produces life. It is kind of strange. Death produces life. Sacrifice produces life, fruit. Giving up our way, being a servant, humbling ourselves. If we can just put this to work in our families, we will have smashing successes in our families.

But it is hard to do because of human nature, because it does not want to submit to death, it does not want to die. It keeps trying to spring back to life.

I thought that would be interesting, now back to John.

John 12:36 “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

The metaphor here is that Jesus gives direction. He makes it possible for people to do things. It is awfully hard to do things in the dark, but when you have light, you can go somewhere, you can accomplish things because you can see. He is of course interested in spiritual things, but it is the terms “sons of light” that I think is interesting.

A son is an offspring. It would be better translated *children* because that is more what the Greek means; it is not indicative of only male offspring, it is “children of light.” What He is saying is that even as children resemble their parents, so will the children of light resemble light. In the metaphor, Christ is the light. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” He said, “I am the light of the world.”

So He says to submit to the light, or believe in the light, that you might have the characteristics of the light. That is the only way that we are ever going to have those characteristics, to believe in the light and do what the light says. That gets back to the sacrificing and the submitting.

We keep going around and around in a circle, and I feel that is why the principle is repeated so frequently by Christ. It is because it is so important to understanding the whole process of growth, the whole process of producing fruit. Unless you catch that vision, you are not going to produce much fruit because human nature keeps trying to convince us that we should not sacrifice ourselves. It resists it, with everything that is within us, and it tries to always please itself. It always tries to comfort, to take pleasure in, to serve itself. We are by nature self-centered. Sacrificing means “away from self.”

But that is the only way that we are going to have the characteristics of the light, like Christ did.

John 12:37-41 But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them." These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

This is a scripture that undoubtedly troubles many, or let us say, any thinking person outside of the church. This is something that is very frequently repeated in the New Testament: it appears seven times, just like this thing about the planting of the seed.

Does God actually blind people? The answer to that is, no, He does not. He does not blind people. But, God does nothing to change the circumstances that produce the blindness, and therefore, He is ultimately responsible. He could take it away. But for His purposes, He has chosen not to, so He is responsible because He is God. He is therefore looked upon as the One who has caused the blindness.

But He did not literally cause the blindness. All He did is allow circumstances to produce or be produced that would cause man to become blind, spiritually. He has, more or less, given Satan a free hand. Satan is literally the one that has produced the blindness, but God has permitted it.

What has produced the blindness? I used a generality, I said that Satan has produced it, and that is correct. But man has a part in that process. In Psalm 111 there is another broad principle that helps us to see something.

Psalm 111:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments.

We certainly believe that. Keeping the commandments of God produces understanding; it gives us insight, it gives us a comprehension of things. We come to really know, by doing. That is true. Therefore, the opposite side of the coin is also true: that those who do not keep His commandments are going to produce misunderstanding, they will produce blindness.

That is what has occurred. God has simply allowed man to be deceived by Satan, and

what Satan has done is deceive man into thinking that it is unnecessary to keep the commandments of God. Therefore, man does not keep the commandments of God; therefore, he produces misunderstanding; therefore, he produces blindness. That is what the process is.

What God does in His calling is that He opens up our minds to see the necessity of keeping the commandments of God. As we begin to keep them, guided by His Spirit, the understanding comes. The blindness is removed. That is why it is necessary to do the commandments, so that we will know. God will not just pour it into our heads. It is not merely an intellectual thing; it is partly intellectual, but it has, as a part of the process, the actual doing of it. That is what gives us the real insight. It is not just theory then, it is something that has come by experience, by practice.

The opposite, the obverse of the coin, is what actually blinds. By breaking commandments, we begin to lose our understanding. We lose our perception, we lose our insight. The distinctions between good and evil, and right and wrong, begin to become blurred. The first thing you know, we cannot tell the difference. That is when our conscience is seared, and repentance is impossible. God help us that we never get to that place. Eventually, we would get to the place where we would not care. The understanding would be so gone.

God, in His mercy, to all who are unconverted, as it says in Romans, has concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all. An unconverted person sins in ignorance, and he does not realize that he is doing wrong, other than having his conscience guilty because he recognizes that there are certain laws within a culture, within a society, within a family, that are expected of him. He will feel guilty to the extent that he is breaking one of society's laws.

Of course, he is breaking God's laws, but the real damage occurs to a person's mind when he breaks commandments *knowing* that he is doing it, and deliberately does it. As long as a person is breaking commandments out of ignorance or out of weakness, the conscience remains able to be changed, and so there is no permanent damage done. Certainly, there will be the effects of sin. But spiritually, little or no damage is done. The person can still repent, because it has not yet been fully related to God.

When James says, in James 3, "To him who knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin," what is implied, without saying it, is that it is sin unto the second death. Very serious indeed. You might say that the rules for those who have knowledge are much more stringent than the rules for judging those who are in ignorance.

That is what God has done: He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes. We have to also put into this I Corinthians 15:23, where Paul shows that He has a purpose that He is working out, and each is going to be called in his own order. God's purpose is worked out, allowing people to experience life, maybe without conversion, but at the same time, protecting their minds so that in the second resurrection, they can come up and repent, because what they have done was done in spiritual ignorance. Very merciful.

John 12:42-43 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

One of the interesting things that this shows is that the disbelief was not total. The things that Jesus said had rung a bell, a right bell, in the minds of many. But God was not calling them to repentance and conversion, and their belief remained something that was hidden because of their fear of the reaction of their peers. They became "secret disciples."

That is interesting, because you cannot be a disciple and keep it in secret. If you are truly a disciple, it is going to destroy your secrecy. You cannot hide the light. Did not Jesus say that, that a light on a hill cannot be hid?

If you keep it secret, you cannot be a disciple. So what it shows is that whichever one we choose to do is going to destroy the other. If you choose to be a disciple and really commit your life to God, and you obey Him, you cannot keep it a secret. All you have to do is keep one commandment: keep the Sabbath because you are a disciple of Christ. The first thing you know, everybody in your family is going to know it.

Let us suppose you try to keep it a secret, that you are keeping the Sabbath. It will destroy your being a disciple. And that is what happened here, in John 12:42. For fear, they kept it to themselves, and if there had been an opportunity, they lost out on it at that time because of their desire to not lose their place.

That is a powerful force. All of us have it, to some degree. We do fear men. We fear what people think of us, maybe in different areas of life. Some may fear a family, some may fear their employer. Some may fear a culture that they are in. So we have a choice to make, and it is a difficult choice that I am not trying to, in any way, denigrate.

These people feared the loss of their place in the community, maybe the fear of business loss, or the loss of prestige. They felt that it was too high of a price to pay, so they chose instead to remain with the status quo. And that destroyed being a disciple.

John 12:44-50 Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."

To the best of our knowledge, this is His last public utterance. Everything from this point on was uttered to His disciples. It is interesting to look at what His last statement to the public was, and what it involved: believing what He said, believing His words, having faith in what He said.

What did He say? In verse 44, He says, "Believe Me!" "Listen to Me!" If there is title that can be put on this book, it is "Behold, your God!" So His last public utterance is: to listen to Him is to listen to God. To see Him is to see God, and in Him, man meets God, and God meets man.

The next thing He says is "I am light." He says if you follow Me, if you believe Me, then you are going to have direction, you are going to have purpose. You are not going to stumble around. You are going to be able to accomplish things—things that have to do with eternal life.

You ought to be able to understand, physically, how limited we are in darkness. How much can you accomplish, physically, in darkness? You have to grope around, you run into things, you get hurt, you cannot do anything with any accuracy. You just have to kind of feel your way around.

Contrast that to what you can accomplish in the light.

The difference between the two, in terms of accomplishment, He is applying to believing

Him, as opposed to remaining in spiritual darkness. Which way is it going to be? If we remain in spiritual darkness, we will accomplish about as much as we can in physical darkness. We will just grope our way around. If we will believe the light, then we are going to accomplish things.

In verse 47, He says, "If you do not follow Me, you have brought judgment upon yourself." He did not come here to judge the world, He did not come here to condemn. He came here to give a witness. But along with the hearing of that witness, inevitably comes judgment. The person brings the judgment on himself by his response to the words of Christ.

In other words, there is no remaining neutral in the light of God's Word. It is *our decision* that brings the judgment.

The next thing that He says in verse 48 is that God's Word is the judge. You can see that plainly spelled out in Revelation 20:11. This has consequences to us that are very interesting, because the more a person knows of the Word of God, the more serious the consequences.

In verse 49, He makes it very clear that what He has spoken to them has not been something that He dreamed up, but rather, it was something that came directly from the Father. It is just another way of saying that in the end, when all is said and done, "You will know that these words were God's words." They were not Jesus'.

I think as an overview of chapter 13, if there is any section of God's Word that shows us the mind of our God, it is this section here, from verses 1 through 17, especially taken in the light of what we have just heard, in His last public utterances. In Jesus, God meets man, and man meets God.

What is this God like? What is His mind like? What is His character like? If you could see God, if you could just see God in a microcosm, what kind of an incident would most reveal the mind of God? What is His attitude towards His creation, what is His attitude towards you and me?

It is a foot washing attitude. *He serves.*

Can you imagine the Creator, kneeling down before *you*? To wash *your* feet? Can you imagine the Creator being so humble, this Being with such awesome power, and such intelligence and such insight—He has lived forever. He has power and magnificence far beyond anything we can think. And yet He is willing to do the most menial task for you,

the tiniest. That is really something.

Let us get a background for what was happening in John 13, by going back to Luke 22. We will make this even more amazing. Luke 22 is a parallel to John 13.

Luke 22:1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover.

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father. . .

In Luke 22:14, just so you understand what is going on:

Luke 22:14 When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.

Luke 22:19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body. . ."

Luke 22:20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."

Luke 22:23-24 Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing. Now there was also rivalry among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.

They were competing with one another as to who would sit on His right hand, and who would sit on His left. Maybe Jesus had it in mind, even before, that He would go through what He was going to do here, in John 13, in the foot washing. It is entirely possible that it was something that was inspired of God, at that moment, because of what was going on—the fighting, the rivalry, the competition, as to which one was the greatest.

And God says, "OK, I'm going to show you once and for all. For 3½ years you haven't gotten it. I'm going to show you as plainly as it can be shown, what I am like! I'm not

striving to be the greatest! I'm here to serve you!"

I think we understand that those people did not wear shoes, like we do. They wore flip-flops, they wore sandals, they wore zories, which were nothing more than a sole held on by straps. Their roads were not paved, so in the summertime, the roads were inches deep in dust. Jerusalem's weather is very similar to Los Angeles' weather: they get rain in the wintertime, and in the summertime it never rains in Southern California, and it never rains in Jerusalem. Their rainfall total is very similar to Los Angeles'. They get about fifteen inches a year, and it all falls in the wintertime.

So their feet were naturally dusty. No matter where they went, their feet were dusty. Everybody who was anybody had a pot of water sitting by the door, and there was usually a servant there, the lowest servant in the house. When guests would come, it was his responsibility to help these people to take their sandals off, and then he would wipe their feet.

It is very likely that on this occasion, that these fellows, the twelve of them plus Jesus, came to this place where the Passover meal was being prepared, and arguing among themselves when they got there. Not having any servants, it was normally the responsibility of one of them to take up that responsibility, and help one another to wash one another's feet. When they were arguing amongst one another, nobody had the humility to wash one another's feet.

So Jesus shamed them by doing it for them.

I think it is very likely that that is what occurred. You can see by Peter's reaction that he did not like that at all. It should have been the disciples' responsibility to wash the feet of their Master. It was common practice that most rabbis had a group of disciples that followed them around. He taught them, and it was their responsibility to wash the master's feet, the rabbi's feet.

But they did not do it. So He took advantage of the situation and did it for them. It is something that they should have carried out.

Romans 12:1-3 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable [or spiritual] service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of

himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

“Not to think more highly.” Right on the heels of presenting your body as a living sacrifice. What is he saying here? He is saying, “Use your faith to serve.”

You do have abilities. That is what that verse says: “God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” If you would read the rest of this chapter, you would find that God has given gifts to all of us.

Philippians 2:1-2 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ [any encouragement, that is what that word means], if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Is that the way the disciples appeared to be at that last supper, where there was rivalry and competing for which one was the greatest? Where they like-minded, were they of one accord?

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit. . .

Think of this in relation to what I said, if there is any section of Scripture that reveals to us the mind of our God, what His character is like, it is John 13:1-17.

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

Now back to John 13. All things have been given into His hands. He knew that His hour had come, the hour of His humiliation. He also knew that the hour of His glory was near, as well.

You know some of the things He did, and some of the things He said. The Spirit of God was given to Him without measure. He told Peter, “Do you think that I could not call on My Father to send 12 legions of angels, and He would respond?” That they would

immediately be there, which shows you that He was giving His life, He was submitting. They were not taking it, He was giving it. He was sacrificing Himself as well, and that power was still there.

Can you imagine what He could have done, what He could have demanded in this situation in John 13, instead of what He did? It really shows His mind. He knew that He was God. He knew His ancestry. He knew that He had come from God, He knew that He was the Creator.

What could He have done with that power—but He did not. He held Himself in restraint, in the example of our God.

John 13:15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

The world is full of people who are standing on their dignity. They are always thinking of their rights, when we should be kneeling, Jesus said, at our brother's feet. It is quite a difference, between us and our God.

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

This verse is actually kind of a bridge, it is kind of an introduction to what is to follow. Probably the most important thing in that verse is that He loved them to the end. It means that He loved them completely. It means that He loved them to the uttermost. The word *end* is *teleos*, it means completely, perfectly—to the end. There was nothing that was withheld from them.

The phrase previous to that, “having loved His own who were in the world,” might give you a wrong impression. What John is saying there is that He had always loved them, but what is to follow is to complete the picture of how He loved them, the depth of His love. The clearest revelation of His mind that could possibly be given, in His attitude towards His fellow man. The foot washing was going to complete the picture.

Carnally, the higher we get, the higher status we get in society, the more money we get, the nicer home we get, the nicer car we get—the more we tend to feel that we should be served, that people should wait on us. People should be shoved out of the way to make

way for us.

Mr. Contardi and I were visiting a man today who has been in show business most of his life. He mentioned a couple of people whose names you would recognize immediately, who came to fame very quickly. He described their attitude. The best word I can use is “bowling people over,” “Hey, get out of my way! Don’t you know who I am?”

But that is not the way our God is. Now we are going to get the completion of the picture, of His orientation towards man.

John 13:2 And supper being ended. . .

An alternative would be, “And supper being laid already.” In other words, it was set out on the table. The meal might have been in process, but it was not completed, as the other accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke very clearly show. It is better that it be translated, “And supper being laid.”

John 13:2 . . . the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him,

Later on in the chapter, it is going to show that it was in his mind, but it had not been absolutely decided upon. Judas had not completely committed himself to it. But he did later on, it was in his mind, it was working, and it was a plan that he would probably put into operation, but he was not totally committed to it yet.

But that begins to tell you something: the sin that he was going to commit was something that was deliberately planned. That is important to understanding the difference between Peter and Judas, and I might add, the other ten as well. They all betrayed Christ, but what was the difference between Peter and Judas? We will get to that later.

John 13:3-4 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands [what He could have done with that power!], and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.

That is interesting, “He laid aside His garments.” In my studies, I found out that that

phrase is *exactly* the same phrase, “He laid down His life.” Here He was laying aside not His life, but He was laying aside His position, His power, His dignity. To illustrate this, He laid aside His garments. He was giving up His uniform, as it were, what we wear to identify our station. He just laid it aside, like He was giving it up, in order to be a servant. That is the mind of our God.

He took a towel, the servant’s towel. The kind of towel the servant would have worn, like an apron, to protect himself from the water and the dirt on the feet that he would have been washing.

There is a verse in I Peter 5, that I think when Peter wrote this, there is no doubt that he was thinking of that Passover night.

I Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility.

Remember the first part of this Bible study: submitting is an act of faith in Christ. Just like Christ committed Himself to Him who judges righteously, we submit, because God is involved in the picture. So Peter is calling on you and me, on all of us, that you be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility. That is what Christ did. He took off His seamless robe, which was something that was very valuable, and was indicative of His position, His regal authority. He took it off, and took upon Himself the clothing of a servant.

There is no doubt that Peter was thinking of that, “And be clothed with humility.”

John 13:5-6 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, “Lord, are You washing my feet?”

Can you get the picture here, that as He began to wash the feet of these men that they were watching with growing discomfort, because they knew that one of them should have taken it up and done it.

This is interesting, because when did He wash Peter’s feet? His are the only feet that are mentioned in the whole account. Is it possible that Peter was first? Or is it possible

that Peter was last? I do not know which one he was, but my feeling is that he was one of the last ones, because he had time to think about it. He probably was growing more and more incredulous, as to what was going on. "Are you washing *my* feet?"

John 13:7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

Peter had to learn to trust Christ, even though he did not understand. Can we do that? Can we commit ourselves to Him who judges righteously, even though we do not understand all of the circumstances that are going on in our life, or going on in the work, or who is doing this, or who is doing that? Can we still commit ourselves to God, now knowing the end? Not knowing what some of the benchmarks are going to be, between now and the end of this difficulty, or the end of our life, or the end, in terms of the Kingdom of God, of the resurrection?

Can we continue to trust Him, knowing that as we go along, understanding will come? Do you believe, as John said in I John 1:8-10 (the verse that I gave you the last time in the peace offering), that love creates its own illumination? And love towards God is the keeping of His commandments, in any circumstance. Just trusting Him, and the illumination will come as we go along.

John 13:7-8 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

Ooh! "Peter, this is the end of our relationship. If I don't wash your feet, this is the end of our companionship."

Peter recognized that this was getting to be serious business, so he came back with what at least appears to be a flippant answer. Maybe not flippant, maybe exuberant. Peter was always exuberant, he seemed to be that way. All the way with Peter, no halfway. He did everything full-throttle.

John 13:9-10 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

There is an interesting thing here. “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet.” Normal circumstances in those times would be, if you were invited to someone’s home, you would be expected to bathe before you went to be a guest in that person’s home. OK, you have bathed, then you put on your zories (your flip-flops or your sandals), and you go out on the dusty streets, a couple of inches of dust. You plod your way over to your neighbor’s house, and by the time you get there, your feet are all dirty again.

He who is bathed, needs only to have his feet washed. He comes into his host’s house, and the servant is there to wash, not the whole body, because only your feet got dirty, from your trudging along the way to his house.

I wonder if there is a parallel there. What is it in the Christian ritual that is analogous to bathing? It is baptism. That is a rite of purification. Did not Peter say in Acts 2:38, “Repent you therefore and be baptized that your sins may be forgiven, and you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” It seems to indicate that the forgiveness of sins, at least in the beginning of our conversion, is directly tied to going through baptism. It is not just the turning, of and by itself, but the following through and obeying God’s command to be baptized. So you go through the rite of purification, of cleansing, and then your sins are forgiven and you are clean, spiritually.

We have been invited by our host to come over to His house and have communion with Him, to have a relationship, to have fellowship with Him. Whose house have we been invited to? To God’s, or to Jesus Christ’s. So you are trudging along the way, this Christian way, and on the way over there, your feet pick up some dust—sin. They become defiled by trudging along the way, and then we get to our Host’s house, and once a year, we have to be made clean again, through foot washing, reconfirming our faith.

Peter adds one more interesting thing to it. He said, “You shall never wash my feet.” I wonder if there was not some pride in this. Is this indicative of a person who is going to trust in his works? He had to quickly repent of that. Is Christ saying back to him, “My work of cleansing you, My work of bathing you, is so good that nothing can be added to it”? I think that He is.

Do we think that our works are going to pull us through? That is what He is saying. “If I do not wash you.” Peter was going to wash himself, literally, in that circumstance.

We have to apply this spiritually. We have to be careful that we do not get into the mindset that somehow or another, God owes us salvation because we obey Him, or that our works cause God to be indebted to us, or that somehow, He owes us something. I

do not think so.

It is our responsibility to keep the commandments of God, because that is our portion. We show God that we believe Him. The keeping of the commandments of God is our part in this character-building process. But we are not saving ourselves, and God does not owe us a thing. We have to have the right attitude.

In verse 10, when He says, “But not all of you [are clean],” He was undoubtedly referring to Judas.

John 13:11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, “You are not all clean.”

He must have known, to some extent, what was churning through Judas’s mind. How much He knew, I do not know. He certainly knew the Scriptures, that someone would betray Him, and He had certainly gotten to the place where He knew which one it was going to be. Did He know that Judas had already sought a way, and if He did know, how did He know?

How would you like to live around someone like that? I think I would walk around with a guilty conscience all of the time. “Oops! Hope you didn’t see that, looking through my mind.” But He was not that way, He was not an accusative person. He was not looking for sin.

That is what He is showing here. He is looking for ways, not to accuse us, not to condemn us, not to judge us—He was looking for ways to help us.

That is a major difference between Him and the Pharisees. The Pharisees avoided sin, or let me put it this way: their approach to righteousness was to avoid sin. It was essentially negative. Jesus’ approach to life was to avoid sin by doing good. It is a whole different ballgame when you do it that way. One is negative, the other is positive.

It is impossible to sin when you are doing good, virtually impossible anyway for us. For Him, it was impossible, and that is the approach to life that God wants us to have. If you do good, it is awfully hard to do bad.

John 13:12-15 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your

Lord and Teacher, 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.

Here is the lesson, the practical application of foot washing. He is our model, He is our example. God serving His creation, serving His creatures, even in the most menial of ways. You see, foot washing is put for the whole circle of activities involved in self-denying love.

There might be tens of thousands of applications, and the foot washing attitude simply serves as a basis for us to draw upon, to apply that principle in other areas. God shows that He is not above serving His creatures. That is His approach.

So we are to put on Christ, and what He did has very wide ramifications. Much wider ramifications than just Passover. Passover is merely a memorial, it is a reminder of what our approach ought to be all year long. It is the attitude underlying our acts that God concentrates on at Passover. Even as He concentrates on putting out sin during the Days of Unleavened Bread. He concentrates on the Holy Spirit and the church at Pentecost, He concentrates on the return of Christ and the resurrection at Trumpets, and Satan's fate at Atonement, the world tomorrow at Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day.

So on Passover, He concentrates on the underlying attitude He wants in all of His children. The sacrificial approach that Jesus of Nazareth had. He gave His love to the uttermost, and the essence of love is sacrifice. It is its heart and core.

The reason it is that way is because of human nature, because of sin that dwells within us. That is what makes sacrifice essential—human nature, because *it does not want to sacrifice*. It wants to please itself.

Another sidelight here is that Jesus' example puts beyond all doubt the feasibility as to what the law commands. This is the purpose of the law. What He did makes the purpose of the law visible. The purpose of the law is to give direction, and He shows it, physically, what its intent is.

God has opened our minds and given us His Spirit to recognize, to be able to perceive, how this principle should be applied in reference to every area of life. We do not see it all at once, it is something that we have to grow into.

We will never cease growing, as long as we are making the effort. But that is what life is about. If we make the effort, if we make the sacrifices to apply this foot washing attitude in every area, what we are hoping to accomplish, this fruit that we are trying to produce, in others, let us say in a relationship, may not literally come to pass now, but it will. That is God's promise, because if you plant the right seed, the right thing is going to grow.

What we have to have faith in is to commit ourselves to God. He will not go back on what He says that He will produce.