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September memory verse Psalm 119:105 (NKJV)

¹⁰⁵ Your word *is* a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

Commentary on John Chapter 13, by Chuck Smith 9.16.2020

Let's turn to the thirteenth chapter of the gospel according to John. We have come into a new section of the gospel of John, which carries us through chapter 17. And chapters 13 through 17 cover a period of approximately 24 to 36 hours. So, this is beginning the night that Jesus was betrayed. And, His prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John is offered sometime prior to the Garden of Gethsemane experience, some twenty-four hours later. So we're actually covering a short period of the life of Christ. But this is such an important period, that John devotes almost one quarter of his gospel to this twenty-four hour period. And so, it is well for us to look carefully at these things that are recorded in this particular period of time, and surely we are now being exposed to the very heart of Jesus. The book of Revelation is the unveiling of Jesus Christ, but this unveils Him to us, surely, as we get this fabulous insight into the heart of Jesus.

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world going back to the Father, having loved his own which we were in the world, he loved them unto the uttermost ([Jhn 13:1](#)).

He loved them unto the completion; He loved them unto the end. Telos is the Greek word, and it means *unto the completion*; that is, unto the completion of their redemption. He loved them to the point that He was willing then to complete their redemption, which cost Him His own life. "Loved them to the uttermost."

And so, this is just before Jesus is going to observe the Passover feast with His disciples, knowing that the hour was come. Now, you remember from the beginning of the gospel of John, we've been dealing with the subject, "My hour is not yet come, My hour is not yet come"? When they were by force going to make Him king, He hid from them for His hour was not yet come? That hour was always a reference to the hour when He would make that supreme sacrifice for your redemption. That was the hour in which He was to be glorified. Glorified by His submission to the Father by going to the cross and dying for our sins.

Now the supper being ended ([Jhn 13:2](#)),

That is, the Passover supper itself, it's over. They've gone through, no doubt, the traditional Jewish Passover with His disciples.

and the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and was going to God; he rose from the supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself ([Jhn 13:2-4](#)).

So now the Passover supper is over. Satan has entered the heart of Judas Iscariot. And Jesus, knowing that this is it, this is the last time He'll be sharing a meal with the disciples, He took a towel and He girded himself with it. A man girded with a towel was a bond slave. This was the sign of a slave, a slave of the lowest order. And Jesus took this towel and girded Himself with it. The disciples did not understand what He was doing. Why would He gird Himself with this towel? That's what a slave did.

And after he poured water into a basin, he began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel. And when he came to Simon Peter: Peter said unto him, Lord, do you wash my feet? ([Jhn 13:5-6](#))

And I think the emphasis is on the pronouns. "Hey, wait a minute! You think that YOU'RE going to wash MY feet?" Peter realized how totally incongruous this was, that the Lord should be washing his feet. It's much like when John the Baptist was approached by Jesus for baptism. And John said, "Hey, no way! I should be baptized by You." And Jesus said, "Allow it to be. Go ahead, it's right that I fulfill all righteousness." So, Peter was sort of alarmed by this and

Jesus answered and said unto him, What I am doing you do not know now; but you will know in a little while ([Jhn 13:7](#)).

"You don't understand what I'm doing right now, Peter, but just hang on a minute and you'll understand."

Peter said unto him, You will never wash my feet ([Jhn 13:8](#)).

You know, that's just something that Peter felt was so totally inconsistent.

And Jesus said to him, If I do not wash you, you really have no part with me. And Peter said unto him, Well, Lord, don't only wash my feet, but wash my hands and my head ([Jhn 13:8-9](#)).

I like Peter, he doesn't understand too much, but he's all gung-ho for it, you know, whatever's right is right, "Let's go for it, Lord."

And Jesus said unto him, He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, and he is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all ([Jhn 13:10](#)).

Now, the washing of the feet was a common practice in the Roman baths. After they had left the bath and returned to the dressing room, they would pick up dirt on their feet walking through. And so, they would always wash their feet when they got back to the dressing room before they got dressed and left. That would be their first act in returning to the dressing room, to remove the dirt picked up on the bottom of their feet, walking from the bath to the dressing room. They were totally clean, they had just been in the bath for maybe an hour or two, but they did pick up some dirt or defilement walking from the bath to the dressing room.

So, what Jesus is in essence saying is that as we walk this path through the world, we may pick up some defilement just from the contact walking through the world. But that defilement is only surface; it isn't in the head, it isn't in the mind, it isn't in my life, it's just washing the feet. As long as your feet are washed, that's all you need. Your heart is already clean. Your mind is already set. Just get rid of that defilement. And coming to church is that kind of an experience. We've been mixing with the world all week long; we've heard the filthy language.

And so, Jesus said, "No, it's not a matter of physical cleanliness now. I told you; you don't understand what I'm doing, Peter." Jesus said, "You are clean, but not all of you."

For Jesus knew who it was that would betray him; that is why he said, You are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and he had taken his garments, and had sat down again ([Jhn 13:11-12](#)),

You see, He had set aside, in order to gird Himself with the towel and take the place of a slave, His garments. And so, now He had taken on His garments again, and He sat down.

and he said unto them, Do you know what I have done unto you? ([Jhn 13:12](#))

Now, I'm surprised Peter didn't say, "Yes, you washed my feet." But he would have missed the whole point. Jesus said,

You call me Master and Lord: and that is correct; for that is what I am ([Jhn 13:13](#)).

You're right in calling Me Master and Lord; I am your Master and Lord.

And if I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them ([Jhn 13:14-17](#)).

Now, because of this, some churches have practiced the ritual of washing feet. And there are some churches that have regular foot-washing services on sort of a regular basis as one of the church rituals. And I have no case against them; if they want to have foot-washing services, that's fine. It doesn't bother me. On occasion, I've had some rather strange individuals who came and who wanted to wash my feet. They used cold water; I would have appreciated it had they used warm water. But, it's something that I can handle. But I think that in having the ritual of foot-washing services, people are really missing the whole lesson. The whole lesson is that of serving one another.

Now, in those days, serving another person was demonstrated by washing their feet. Now, we don't live in the days of slavery anymore, and we don't live in the days of open sandals and dirt footpaths. So, washing a person's feet isn't a general kind of a practice at all in our culture. You might better fulfill this by going over and mowing your neighbor's lawn, or washing out his garbage pail. It's whole thrust is that I am not so great, but what I cannot serve you in your needs. And I should be willing to take the place of a servant to serve my brothers for the Lord's sake. I'm not too big to serve you. And, it's just taking that place of, "Hey, I'm not too big to do that."

Now, Jesus, in essence, is saying, "Look, no task is beneath you. Serve one another. Take the attitude of a servant towards each other. Be willing to give yourself to serve another person's need. Don't put yourself on pedestals. Don't exalt yourself. Don't get so high and mighty that you begin to demand people to serve you. Look, I've set for you an example here. The example that I have set is for you to take the place of a servant."

Now, basically, He is talking to His disciples who were to be the first ministers in the church. And as a minister, you're not to get a glorified, exalted opinion of yourself in thinking that people ought to start waiting on you, because, after all, you're the minister. They ought to bring you a cup of coffee when you come in, they ought to come over and ask if they can do something for you, you know, and make you comfortable. And after all, "I'm the minister." And unfortunately, many ministers get that kind of a mindset, that, "Because I'm the minister, I should be waited upon and taken care of." Not so. That isn't what the word *minister* implies at all. The word *minister* is the word *servant*. And what it means is that I am the one that should be bringing you a cup of coffee, and bringing you a chair and taking care of you, making sure that you're comfortable. And whenever I think that I'm so high and mighty that you've got to wait on me, then I need to get into some other business. When I'm not willing to serve, and to take care of someone else's needs, then I've become bigger than my Lord and then I'm in big trouble. I don't have the same attitude as my Lord, and thus, I'm not His true representative. And so, this attitude of a servant. Jesus said, "Do you see what I've done? Now, if I, being your Lord and Master, and you call Me Lord and Master, and that's right, but if I being your Lord am willing to serve you, then you ought to be serving one another. Don't set yourself up on a pinnacle, don't set yourself up where you're waiting for men to serve you. You get out and you serve the needs of the world." God help us; we need more ministers who are servants. That's the true minister of Jesus Christ.

"Now if you know these things," He said, "happy are you if you do them." Not if you know them, because knowing isn't enough. James said, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" ([James 1:22](#)). The joy of serving one another in the body of Jesus Christ is a great joy indeed.

I speak not to all of you: for I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me has lifted up his heel against me. Now I am telling you before it comes, that, when it is come to pass, you might believe that I am ([Jhn 13:18-19](#)).

And He is using here that name of God in the Old Testament, "You might believe that I am."

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receives me; and he that receives me receives him that sent me ([Jhn 13:20](#)).

So the chain: if you receive one that the Lord has sent, you're receiving the Lord; if you're receiving him, you're receiving the Father.

When Jesus had thus said this, he was troubled in his spirit ([Jhn 13:21](#)),

Though He knew that Judas was going to betray Him, and though He had chosen Judas, and when He chose him, knew that that was the lot of Judas...knowing that the scriptures had to be fulfilled, He chose him because the scriptures said, that, "He who ate bread with Him would lift up his heel against Him." But yet, it still troubled Jesus that Judas would do this after having been with Him.

And so, "Jesus was troubled in His Spirit,"

and he testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked at one another, wondering who he was talking about. Now there was one of the disciples ([Jhn 13:21-23](#))

And, of course, John is talking about himself now in an abstract way, but it was John, who was leaning on Jesus' bosom, [and John said,] and he was one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved ([Jhn 13:23](#)).

John was, no doubt, a very loving person. It's brought out in his writings themselves. He speaks in very loving tones always, and speaks of love so much. And so,

Simon Peter beckoned to him, that he should ask who it was that Jesus was referring to ([Jhn 13:24](#)).

You know, he'd be next to him saying, "John, go ahead and ask Him who it was Jesus was talking about."

He then who was lying on Jesus' breast said unto him, Lord, who is it? And Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon ([Jhn 13:25-26](#)).

The dipping of a sop and handing it to a person in those days was equivalent to toasting a person. Now today, sometimes at functions and all, they'll give a toast to somebody. It's a gesture of friendship. And in those days, the dipping of a sop and handing it to the person was equivalent to the toasting of a person. It was a gesture of friendship. I think that Jesus, even at this point, was saying, "Judas, if you want out, you can get out. You don't have to go through with it, even though you've already been into the high priest and made a deal and have bargained with them; I would still like to be your friend."

And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then Jesus said to him, What you do, do quickly. So, no man at the table knew that this is what Jesus was referring to. Some of them thought, because Judas was the treasurer, that Jesus was sending him out to buy supplies; or, maybe to give something to the poor, [inasmuch as this was Passover.] And he then, having received the sop went immediately out; and it was night. Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him ([Jhn 13:27-31](#)).

"The hour is come, I'm going to be glorified." How? Strangely enough, by being crucified.

Little children ([Jhn 13:33](#)),

And this is the only time Jesus has used this term, and it's a very tender term. John uses it in his other epistles; *teknon*, the little children.

yet a little while and I am with you. You will seek me; and I said unto the Jews, Where I go, you cannot come; so I say it now to you ([Jhn 13:33](#)).

In just a little while, you're going to seek Me, but where I'm going you cannot come.

And a new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another ([Jhn 13:34-35](#)).

The new commandment. The new commandment is an all-inclusive kind of commandment because you don't have to worry about, "Thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor, thou shalt not covet, thou shalt not commit adultery." You don't have to worry about all of those if you obey this commandment, "Love one another, even as I have loved you." Now, that is supreme love. That is self-sacrificing love. That is giving love. And that's the kind of love He wants us to have for each other. And by this sign will the world know that we are truly the disciples of Jesus Christ, when we have this kind of love.

I do not believe that we do have this kind of love. We see it in small measures here and there, we see demonstrations of it now and then; but for the most part, we've got a long way to go. Because His love for us was supreme love. It was a self-sacrificing love. He gave Himself for us, because He loved us. And that's the kind of love we're to have, as He has loved us.

John, when writing his epistle, said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." So, our love for each other is, first of all, a sign to the world by which they may know that we are His disciples. But secondly, it becomes a sign even to us. I know that I have passed from death unto life, because of this love that God has put in my heart for the family of God. May God work in us and may our hearts be open for that work that we might love more and more. Not in words, but in deed, in our deeds towards one another, and thus, in truth. Oh, God, work in our hearts. In fact, let's just open our hearts right now and just ask God to allow that Holy Spirit to work in our hearts tonight. For the fruit of the Spirit is love. And we need this kind of love, as a witness to the world around us that we are truly His disciples.

I fail so much in this area. So many times I'm looking out for myself when I should be looking out for others. I'm interested in taking care of my needs, when I should be interested in taking care of the needs of others. And I need that God will just really work this love in my heart tonight.

Let's just for a moment, all of us, just sort of open our hearts and ask God, by His Holy Spirit to work in us tonight this kind of love. That even as He has loved us, so may we love one another.

Father, we pray now for that special work of Your Holy Spirit, planting this kind of love in our hearts. We realize, Lord, that we don't have the capacity to manufacture it. It's more than a human emotion, it is a divine God-given capacity. And Lord, we want it. We want this love. We want our lives to be marked by this kind of love. Jesus, work in us now. Let Your Holy Spirit, Father, just fill us now with Your love, that we might indeed love one another, even as You loved us. Thank You, Lord, for Your work tonight. Continue Thy work, until Your love is perfected in us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, where are you going? And Jesus answered him, Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow me afterwards ([Jhn 13:36](#)).

Right now, Peter, you can't follow Me. Later on you will.

Peter said unto him, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Will you lay down your life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto you, The cock shall not crow, until you have denied me three times ([Jhn 13:37-38](#)).

In just a little while, some twenty-four hours, Jesus will be saying to Peter, "Peter, pray with Me. I really feel in need of help. Pray with Me." And when Jesus comes back to

Peter, He's going to find him asleep. And He's going to say to Peter, "Oh, Peter, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And that's the case here. I believe that Peter was totally sincere when he said, "Lord, I will lay down my life for You." I believe that Peter meant that. I do not at all question Peter's love, devotion and sincerity towards his Lord. The spirit indeed was willing, but his flesh was weak. Unfortunately, I find myself often in that category, where my spirit indeed is willing to do the right thing.

Now, there are times when my spirit isn't willing to do the right thing, too. But there are times when my spirit is willing to do the right thing, but my flesh is weak. When I have been hasty in saying something about someone and I know that I owe them an apology, then is when my spirit isn't willing. 'Cause I sort of feel that they deserved having said about them what I said. And the Lord begins to speak to my heart, and say, "Hey, even so, that's wrong. Now, you ought to go and ask their forgiveness." "Uuuuhhh, I don't want to, Lord." My spirit's not willing. So part of the time, that's my problem. And some of the times, as God is laying things on my heart, I have to say, "Lord, I am not willing to do that. And You're just going to have to make me willing to be willing, because I'm not willing." But then, there are other times where my spirit indeed is willing, but my old flesh cringes. It's weak.

Peter was sincere. His love for the Lord was genuine. His commitment was real. And Peter really felt that he could lay down his life for Jesus. And I wouldn't be a bit surprised but what he could have. But many times, it's harder to live for Jesus than it is to die for Jesus. You know, the chips are really down when someone is pointing a gun at you, and they say, "Hey, deny the Lord, or we're going to blow your head off!" You say, "Hey, fire away. I'm willing to die for Jesus, be with Him in glory." The problem, oftentimes, is living for Jesus! And sometimes that's much harder than dying for Him.

That's what Peter found out. Standing up for Him, when the crowd was against him, when these little girls came up and said, "Oh, you're one of them; I saw you with Him." "What are you talking about? I don't know Him. I'm just here warming my hands by the fire." "Surely, I saw you with Him; you're one of them." "No, I don't know Him." You see, living for Jesus was the problem for Peter; dying for Him was another thing. In the garden, he was willing to pull his sword and swing away and go down swinging. But many times, the Lord is calling us not to die for Him, but to just live for Him. "Lord, I'm willing to die for You." "Peter, you're going to fail."